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PARAMETERS OF POWER: THE QUANDARY OF YEMEN BETWEEN THE WORLD WARS

By

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Dedicated to the memory of my only child, Cody Aaron Boyett, whose shared love of history, language and travel inspired me to this end.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

List of Figures vi
Abstract vii

1. INTRODUCTION 1

    1.1 Historical Questions 1
    1.2 The Geographical Parameters 9
    1.3 Historiographical Overview 17
    1.4 Theoretical Framework 24

2. THE POLITICS OF THE PANOPTICON 30

    2.1 Preparation of Imperial Leaders 30
    2.2 The End of the War & Caliphate Concerns 33
    2.3 The Committee Decisions and the Role of Lord Curzon 35
    2.4 The Aden Resident's Dilemma 41
    2.5 Interdepartmental Conflict 43
    2.6 Tribal Confederations 50

3. RELIGION AS VEHICLE OF AGENCY 53

    3.1 The "Islams" of the Yemen 53
    3.2 The Impact of Religious Reform Movements 57
    3.3 The Idris of Asir 59
    3.4 The Zaydi Imam Yahya 66

4. THE POLITICAL ECONOMY OF THE RED SEA 77

    4.1 Lieutenant Wyman's Report 77
    4.2 The Gun-Running Italians 79
    4.3 The Slave-Trading French 83
    4.4 The Communist Soviets 99

5. THE POLICING OF JEWISH PERSECUTION 103

    5.1 Background of Yemeni Jewry 103
    5.2 Changes of the Post-War Zaydi Regime 105
    5.3 The Quandary of Yemeni Jewish Refugees in Aden 110

6. EPILOGUE AND CONCLUSION 118

    6.1 The Treaty of 1934 118
    6.2 21st Century Déjà Vu 120
    6.3 The Relevance of 'Ungoverned Spaces' in Yemen 129

GLOSSARY 139

BIBLIOGRAPHY 141

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH 153

LIST OF FIGURES

1.1 Tribal Religious Affiliations 134

1.2 Conflicting/Overlapping Policy in the Interwar Period 135

1.3 Map of Religious Divisions in Yemen 136

1.4 Map of Red Sea Slave Routes 137

1.5 Principal Importing Countries to Yemen, 1904-1914 138

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this dissertation is to use a Foucauldian lens to examine the nature and scope of the many challenges the British faced in southwest Arabia in the wake of the retreating Ottoman Empire at the end of the First World War. The subsequent power vacuum which ensued meant that Britain had to make a decision as to the nature of its future imperial policy in Yemen beyond Aden. The challenge would be to maintain the security of the Red Sea route to India by implementing some sort of cost-effective imperial arrangement which allowed for some measure of Yemeni autonomy while keeping European competitors at a safe distance.

While the focus of the study is on Yemen, it begins with an explanation of the overlapping concerns of competing centers of power in Delhi, Cairo, and London and the fundamentally different visions they had for the Middle East in general, and the Arabian Peninsula, in particular. The professionals who staffed the India Office, the Foreign Office, and the Colonial Office held divergent views of where Yemen fit into their imperial plans, reflecting the various experiences they drew upon from their careers in Africa and India. They simply could not decide if Yemen belonged more to the Indian imperial system, or conversely, to the Red Sea world of colonial Africa. The failure to resolve this fundamental difference of vision led to the support of two different leaders in Yemen, the Sufi Idris of Asir and the Zaydi Imam of Sanaa. The default plan was for Aden-in Foucauldian style-to serve as a type of panopticon, overseeing the region with appropriate discipline and rewards via less formal, trucial-style arrangements with various tribal shaykhs and other notables, believing that keeping southwest Arabia divided would serve Britain's strategic interests.

A central theme is the display of Arab agency through the power and influence of Yemeni leaders who leveraged their religious heritage to reinforce their own positions and to

maintain a state of chaos along the border with Aden in the south, and the Eastern and Western Protectorates. Ultimately, the British government concluded the Treaty of Sanaa in 1934 with a figure whom it had not initially backed, the Zaydi Imam Yahya, This delay of fourteen years to resolve the lingering territorial issues carried over from the war diminished the reputation of Britain at home and abroad, and ensured that these issues would continue to reverberate in Yemen into the twenty-first century, while taking on new and different outer forms.

The dissertation concludes with a brief examination of these reverberations by comparing the problems faced by the British in the interwar period to those of the United States and her allies today. Although Yemenis witnessed increased independence and agency with the retreat of the Ottomans at the end of World War One, pressure (and eventually, violence) emanating from Aden acted to corral it within the parameters of the imperial panopticon based there. These problems include an excessive number of armaments and foreign soldiers emanating from "ungoverned spaces," large numbers of poor and exploited African immigrants, the presence of potentially volatile, non-orthodox forms of Islam, financial extortion by native leaders and the failed attempts by Western hegemonic forces to manage these problems effectively from a distance. Many of these same problems exist in the region today, now supervised from Camp Lemonnier, Djibouti, rather than Aden, and the disparity between Yemeni expectations and reality have erupted in revolutionary fervor with a distinct anti-Western bias.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Historical Questions

> I . . .request. . .an early reply as to the general question whether His Majesty's Government are to secure a Mandate for Arabia or whether Arabia is to be kept outside the scope of the Peace Conference.[1]
>
> The policy of His Majesty's Government is not. . .to secure a mandate for Great Britain in Arabia, but to obtain [recognition that] Great Britain has special political interests in the Peninsula and in the islands under the sovereignty of independent rulers of the mainland. The High Contracting Parties. . .seek no political influence and no territorial aggrandizement for themselves in that region.[2]

The period prior to the outbreak of war in 1914 witnessed a precarious balance of two powers in southwest Arabia. The hegemon in the mountainous terrain to the north and the Tihama plain to the west was the Ottoman Empire, while the British dominated the south from Aden, at the mouth of the Red Sea, eastward to the Hadramaut. The collapse of the Ottoman Empire at the conclusion of World War I and the subsequent power vacuum which ensued meant that Great Britain had to make a decision as to the nature of its future imperial policy in Yemen beyond Aden, with special attention paid to maintaining the security of the Red Sea route to India, a route fraught with threats from a variety of sources.

There were many threats in the two decades following the war. First, there were numerous slavers, gun runners, and imperial competitors which could undermine the British

[1] FO 608/81 Telegram No. 581 drafted by Colonel Jacobs and sent by General Allenby to Lord Balfour, Dated April 15, 1919.

[2] FO 608/81Response to Telegram No. 581 from the British Delegation in Paris, signed by Louis Mallet for Mr. Balfour. Dated May 6, 1919.

presence in the Red Sea. Additionally, the predominance of non-orthodox forms of Islam made officials alert to potentially threatening or independent elements which made up Islamic practice in the region of the Red Sea. Likewise, the inhabitants of Yemen were increasingly coming under the influence of pan-Arab and pan-Islamic ideologies which could jeopardize the stability of the region. Another issue developed when the Jewish minority in Yemen came under growing persecution, leading many to immigrate to Palestine at the precise moment when the British were trying to downplay the 1917 Balfour Declaration to the Arab population there. Lastly, the Yemeni Imam was encroaching upon the Indian outpost at Aden, claiming rights that pre-dated the Ottoman occupation, stirring up discontent among tribes who previously had signed protectorate agreements with Aden.[3]

The expected response was for Britain to do what it had done for decades in other parts of the world: establish some sort of imperial arrangement in Yemen. After all, despite the editorials in the British press, imperialism was not yet dead in the early twentieth century, and His Majesty's Government had no near-term plans to give up India, of which the colony at Aden was an extension. Notwithstanding these facts, Britain made the decision to avoid direct imperial rule in both north and south Arabia. Even the less intrusive form of colonialism known as the "Mandate System" (introduced as a gradual way for nascent nations to pursue self-determination) was discarded as a consideration for Yemen while the delegation was still in Paris at the Peace Conference. The war-weary public back home clamored for a reduction of expenses by shrinking the size of empire. Imperialism was not dead, but the cost of war had greatly reduced its momentum. Yemen would not be a colony, nor would it be a mandate.

[3] The term "Imam" has dual meanings. In a Shia context, as it is used here, it is a title which has been used since the death of Ali and his sons to connote both political and religious leadership. Within a Sunni context, it is merely a title for the Friday prayer leader at the local mosque.

If it is true that the historical trajectory for empire was waning by 1919, then one could argue that the Middle East mandates conceived by the Sykes-Picot Agreement and sponsored by the new League of Nations were the exception rather than the rule. Yet, there were predictable and compelling concerns with regard to Arabia-specifically in Yemen-which the High Contracting Parties seemed to be willing to ignore. Were the various offices and agencies of the British and Indian governments ignorant of the potential quagmire that was developing? Did they deem Yemen not sufficiently promising in talent or raw materials or ideas to justify the expense, energy and effort of a mandate or some other imperial template? The answer is hubris. The documentary evidence from the India Office (Delhi) and the Government of India (London) reveal the belief that the inevitable concerns to arise in Yemen could be managed from a distance and at low cost, without incurring the financial burden of a colony, mandate or other formal imperial structure. Likewise, the Foreign and Colonial Offices' concerns with Yemen extended only as far as they impacted their own operations in Cairo and Khartoum, as well as those of Britain's imperial competitor, Italy, on the African side of the Red Sea.[4]

Thus, while the victorious Allies and their interlocutors were cannibalizing the Lebanon, Syria, Iraq and Palestine via the League of Nations Mandate apparatus, the British Foreign Office and the India Office embarked on a fourteen-year-long contentious inter-departmental struggle as they continued to insist upon the non-importance of Yemen. All could be managed from the panopticon of the port at Aden. Before it was over in 1934 per treaty agreement with the Yemeni Imam, the Colonial Office, the Admiralty, and the newly-styled Air Ministry would also become involved. The inhabitants of Yemen and their leaders found new ways to express their agency as they pursued trade agreements with the Italians and the Bolshevik revolutionaries in the new Soviet Union, smuggled guns and slaves across the Red Sea, and practiced divergent

[4] Italy had annexed Eritrea, Somalia, and Libya by 1914, and would occupy Ethiopia by 1935.

forms of Islam. Additionally, increasing numbers of Jewish inhabitants of Yemen who migrated to the Palestine Mandate led to dissatisfied Arab partners and the interference of the Americans, which further confounded policy-makers. It gradually dawned on a new generation of British career diplomats that their nation's post-war policy in Yemen had failed.

There appears to be a gap in Yemen studies for the inter-war period which this paper will attempt to fill. There are several brilliant monographs which examine individual topics such as the economic impact of the slave trade in Yemen, or the political implications of intertribal warfare for state-building among the Zaydi Shias. But there is no single macro-history which attempts to examine the region in the two decades following the First World War in a holistic fashion. Instead, the vestigial parts of this time and place lay isolated, disconnected and misunderstood, a chasm separating the writing of Yemen's history from the realities of the Red Sea world and the Indian subcontinent, with which it was inextricably intertwined. It is this world of African economic and Sufi connections, pan-Islamism and pan-Arabism, European armament manufacture and Russian Bolshevism which are also a part of Yemen's history, and whose relationships will be made clear.

On October 18, 1926, the Colonial Office issued a memorandum in which it listed the three most problematic issues in southwest Arabia since the end of the war. At the top of the list was the person of the Zaydi Imam Yahya, who was occupying parts of the Aden Protectorate based on pre-Ottoman historical claims. Secondly, it listed the conflict along the eastern Red Sea between the Zaydi Imam and the Idris of Asir.[5] The last issue mentioned was the continual

[5] The term *Idris* is both a title of an individual as well as a term used to refer to an entire group of people who lived in the Yemeni province of Asir (now part of southwest Saudi Arabia.) The adjectival form is *Idrisi* and the plural form, *Adaris*.

Italian encroachment in Yemen.[6] How then could the various British and Indian agencies located in London, Cairo, and Bombay exert control over Yemen with limited liability of troops and money, and without seeming to be engaged in undermining Yemeni self-determination? Great Britain would belatedly resolve these issues by 1934, but at a greater cost in time, money, and international reputation than it would have imagined or desired. The path to resolution of these problems underscored the rift between those in the Colonial Office who envisioned Cairo as the center of a new Viceroyalty in the Middle East, and those in the Government of India Office who supported the traditional one in the subcontinent. The struggle to overcome these issues also highlighted weaknesses in the new global system, as an old imperial power attempted to maintain its hegemony in the new Wilsonian world.

What this dissertation proposes to do is demonstrate just how ineffective British foreign policy was in this time and space. Officially the policy was to have a *laissez faire* approach, with the understanding that all necessary intelligence-gathering and observance could be conducted via Aden, which would serve as a type of affordable panopticon for British India, scanning in all directions any potential problems for the Raj, while simultaneously conditioning the Yemenis to align with British policy. All of this was to be accomplished without incurring the cost of occupation.[7] It did not work, and both the Foreign Office and the India Office (later joined by the Colonial Office, the Admiralty, and the Air Ministry) were forced to interfere time and again when Yemeni figures made independent economic and political decisions that appeared to be counter to Aden's wishes. Unofficially there was manipulation behind the scenes, as it became apparent that the two leading contenders for power- the Idris of Asir and the Imam Yahya of

[6] CAB/24/182 Secret Cabinet Memorandum "Situation in South West Arabia" dated October 18, 1926.

[7] The concept of the panopticon is attributed to Jeremy Bentham, and was later elaborated upon by French philosopher Michel Foucault. Please see the further discussion provided later in this chapter on page 23 to understand how it is being used in this imperial context.

Sanaa-were able to build power bases rooted in their various religious heritages. This exercise of Arab agency within religious frameworks was unexpected and existed separate and apart from tribal allegiance.

Another goal of this paper is to examine Yemen within the context of the Red Sea region as a whole, and to explore the various ways that the economy and politics of Yemen were intertwined with her African neighbors. World War I accelerated the trade in arms for slaves, when the Ottomans retreated and left their gun-making factories and excess weapons in the highlands of Sanaa as well as in the Tihama ports of Mocha and Hodeida. The documentary evidence reveals that these weapons were traded for black Africans from across the Red Sea, and that this had not substantially abated even a decade after the end of the war. The Red Sea trade and traffic itself, with the constant exchange of guns for slaves, required constant monitoring by first the Admiralty via the Red Sea Patrol, and later the Royal Air Force, as well as the Colonial Office, which had to address the ineptitude of Italian and French imperialists in Eritrea and Somaliland, leading to lengthy and intractable negotiations. Additionally, the need to monitor epidemic diseases during the Hajj season was important to the India Office, as large populations of Indian Muslims would travel along the Red Sea to Mecca. The use of the Farsan Islands and Kamaran Island for necessary quarantining and way stations would be essential to Aden. Control of the island of Perim further to the south was needed to maintain lighthouses for safe navigation. Keeping such strategic islands beyond the reach of the Italians and the French was a careful chess match needing constant attention. The British could not afford to have another foreign power controlling both sides of the Red Sea, as it would place India's main thorough-fare of communication and trade in jeopardy in the event of another world-wide conflict.

New and dangerous notions of community emerged during the inter-war years, and so a third goal is to explore the impact that new ideologies had on influencing policy in Yemen. The Bolshevism of the Russian Revolution in 1917 and the fascism of Mussolini and his ensuing conquest of Ethiopia in the early 1930s were seen as direct threats to Aden's power. The fear of the spread of Bolshevism increased with every cable intercepted between the incipient Soviet Union and the Zaydi Imam Yahya, which caused no small amount of concern in Aden. The Resident, who was directly subordinate to the India Office, genuinely believed that Bolshevism would infect the entire Empire. He regularly opined that he feared that Yemen would be used to recruit religious, Mecca-bound pilgrims to communist ideology as they made their path up the Red Sea during the pilgrimage season. Through the lens of history scholars know that this fear was largely unfounded, yet it nevertheless was a palpable fear, experienced by the actors in that time and place. Similarly, Aden was also preoccupied with potential Bolshevik influence in Ethiopia, although the Italians themselves appear to have represented a far bigger threat to the British empire. It was also at this time that nationalist sentiment arose via Pan-Arab and Pan-Islamic teachings which worked their way through newspapers from Cairo and Khartoum to the remote, terraced qat fields of Yemen, causing yet even more official unease.

The policing of persecution of Jews in Yemen was an ongoing and very public issue, constituting yet a fourth aspect of this paper. Many believed (especially in the United States) that the moral responsibility to ensure the safety of the Yemeni Jews should fall to Great Britain. After all, it was the Foreign Secretary Lord Balfour who had articulated the need for a Jewish homeland in Palestine. With British monitoring of immigration into Palestine, it was a sensitive issue for the India Office or the Foreign Office to support Jewish emigration from Yemen. The alternative was to apply pressure on Yemeni leaders to alleviate persecution of the Jewish

community there. Wilson's notion of self-determination could be used to defend the Jews in Yemen, or by Yemeni leaders who would definitely perceive British intervention as an unnecessary foreign insertion into the internal workings of their government.

A final goal of this dissertation is to underscore the parallels between Yemen in the post-World War I period and today. With renewed political and confessional conflict in Yemen in the 21st century, it is instructive to examine the post-World War I period to shed light on any events which may have foreshadowed the present conflict there. Residual armaments left in Yemen from the retreating Ottoman forces compare to the extensive quantities of weapons which have today made their way to the region after wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, and are equally destabilizing. The use of American drones in Taiz and Sanaa eerily parallels the nascent Royal Air Force from the early twentieth century, as it tried to use bombing campaigns and acts of communal coercion to force Yemenis into compliance. Likewise, today's large immigrant populations fleeing for their lives from Africa as refugees from Ethiopia, Sudan and the failing state of Somalia conjure up images of the sizeable clusters of Africans who made their way to coastal Yemen in the 1920s and 1930s in the form of slave cargo, mercenary soldiers, or religious pilgrims. And, like the newspapers of the 1920s, the Internet now provides new ways for religious communities to connect with like-minded believers across the Islamic world, while Yemeni leaders extort payments from Western powers ostensibly to restrain the radicalism presented by the presence of Al Qaeda on the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP) and the Zaydi Houthi rebels of Saada, The role of resurgent Sufism in south Arabia will be addressed, connecting recent groups to earlier figures of religious authority.[8]

[8] Alexander Knysh, "The 'Tariqa' on a Land Cruiser: The Resurgence of Sufism in Yemen." *Middle East Journal* 55. no. 3 (2001): 400.

This paper is expected to establish that-despite strenuous protestations to the contrary-the British government was highly motivated to direct and control activities within Yemen and the Red Sea littoral following World War One. Regardless of the familiar historical narratives of the last few decades, the official correspondence, intercepted communications, military training manuals, and transcripts of Cabinet meetings all indicate that Yemen was an important and strategic priority in the Middle East and not to be ignored. However, believing that all concerns could be monitored and maintained in a non-coercive manner from Aden, both the India Office and the Foreign Office underestimated the strength of Arab agency and the role of religion, which kept them from partnering with the optimal strategic partner and slowed down the progress of diplomacy until 1934, when a treaty was finally signed between the British Government and the Imam Yahya. This dissertation will examine specific acts of Yemeni leaders, which for a time challenged and rendered impotent the leading figures from the India Office, Foreign Office, Red Sea Patrol, and the Aden Residency and threatened what the British considered their life-line to India.

1.2 The Geographical Parameters

Yemen is located on the Arabian Peninsula, south of what is currently known as Saudi Arabia (historically the Hijaz and Nejd) and west of Oman. The name itself is derived from the Arabic *yameen*, referring to its location to the "right" of Mecca.[9] Situated along the convergence of three trade routes, in antiquity it became known as the source of frankincense and myrrh.

[9] G. Wyman Bury, *The Land of Uz* (London: Macmillan and Company, 1911), x. "Yemen, the country 'on the right hand,' (i.e. on the right of an observer at Mecca, looking eastward) is understood by Arabs as meaning the whole south-western portion of Arabia."Former President of the Republic of Yemen, Ali Abdullah Saleh actually cites this as one possible reason for Yemen's name. See http://www.presidentsaleh.gov.ye/shownews.php?lng=en&_newsctgry=8 "[S}ome of the Arab historians said it is called Yemen because it sets in the right direction of Al-Ka'aba."

Some have identified it as the "Land of Uz" referenced in the book of Job.[10] It also figures prominently in early Islamic lore, as the persecuted Muhammad fleeing Mecca allegedly warned his followers "When disaster threatens, seek refuge in Yemen."[11]

Yemen's western and southern borders are bodies of water, which-rather than serve as barriers-have historically operated as superhighways, connecting the Peninsula with Africa and the Indian Ocean trade via the seasonal monsoons. The port cities and fishing villages that dotted the shore in places like Hodeida, Mocha, and Khoka defined the culture of the tribes located along the Red Sea, providing an economic and cultural continuum throughout the centuries. The critical importance of this waterway was underscored by an Aden Resident who stated that "the neck of the British Empire is not merely the Suez Canal, but the whole length [of the Red Sea] from Port Said to Aden."[12] Beyond the Red Sea and to the west lay the north east coast of Africa.

At the southern entrance is Bab al-Mandeb, the finger of water which separates the Arabian Peninsula from the coast of Africa, approximately eighteen miles across. This "Gate of Tears" oversees some of the busiest shipping lanes in the world, both in the early twentieth century and today. There is some speculation that its name is tied to the historical reality of piracy and slavery which have influenced commerce in the region from antiquity to the present time. Beyond this to the south lie the Gulf of Aden and the Arabian Sea.

The geographical boundaries of Yemen in the early 20th century are best understood in three parts. First, there was Aden, which was established by the British East India Company, and later governed as an extension of the Government of India from 1839-1937, and (including some

[10] G. Wyman Bury, *The Land of Uz* (London: Macmillan and Company, 1911), xiv. Southern Arabia is only one possible location for Uz. Other suggestions include Edom (Jordan) as well as southern Syria.

[11] Gregory Johnsen, author of *The Last Refuge: Yemen, al-Qaeda, and America's War in Arabia* cites this quotation from Muhammad in the prologue to his book, but does not provide the specific Quranic surah or hadith.

[12] CAB 24/143/AP366, Telegram, 22 May 1917. Describing the Red Sea as the "neck" of the Empire underscores the critical need to maintain control of the jugular artery of empire.

islands) was made a British Crown Colony from 1937-1963. By 1967, after a brief stint as the Federation of South Arabia, it became the People's Republic of South Yemen. Second, there was the Eastern Protectorate (including the Hadramaut) and Western Protectorate which served as informal buffers in the near and far hinterlands of Aden. Finally there was Yemen proper, located south of the Hijaz and Nejd and north of Aden and the Protectorates. In 1904 the Anglo-Turkish Boundary Commission established the demarcation line, separating Yemen into Ottoman (north) and British (south) spheres of influence. When the Ottoman Empire was dissolved at the end of the First World War, it was this former Ottoman vilayet/sphere of influence in the north whose disposition came under question. It is this part of the Yemen which is the primary focus of this paper, because the various native leaders who asserted control after the Ottoman departure refused to recognize the 1904 treaty. Since May of 1990, all three parts have been a single political entity known as the Republic of Yemen

The islands of Yemen should also be mentioned. Perim Island, administered by the Aden Resident and located in the Bab al-Mandeb, operated as a coaling station from 1883, as well as a pearling center and bunkering market. Its strategic location made it a perfect spot for a lighthouse. Further up the Red Sea coast is Kamaran Island, approximately opposite the port city of Hodeidah. It was highly-coveted by the Italians, causing no small amount of anxiety on the part of Aden officials in the competitive, post-war imperial environment. At various times Kamaran served as a quarantine station for pilgrims on the Haj, and at others as a telegraph station and even an RAF airfield.[13] Further to the north are the Farasan Islands, an archipelago which by tradition belonged to the Idris of Asir, now in the possession of Saudi Arabia, near the

[13]The Italians were always eager to control Kamaran Island, and to avoid this from happening, the British invited the Dutch to contribute a medical officer to jointly manage the quarantine depot, thus to allay Italian concerns of a military takeover, although it was administered by the Government of India via the Aden Resident.

port of Jizan. Just as they had at Kamaran, the Italians constantly made attempts to assume control over this chain, which factored into periodic Anglo-Italian negotiations.

The earliest British traveler to Yemen appears to have been one, John Jourdain, an official of the East India Company, who arrived in 1609, approximately a century after the Portuguese.[14] The first English agreement with the Ottoman Sultan granted the East India Company the right to engage in the coffee trade freely.[15] This led to an increase in activity between India and Arabia, but with the Ottoman departure in 1636, it would not be until 1839 that Britain-in that extraordinary blend of corporate and government power that only the East India Company could wield- would be able to assert control over Aden. It was perfectly positioned to serve as a coaling station, as well as the "eye of the Empire," being located near the critical juncture of the Bab al Mandeb, the gateway to the Red Sea. By 1869, the construction of the Suez Canal reduced the distance between London and Bombay from over 10,700 miles to 6,270 miles.[16] This ensured increased usage, and underscored the need to maintain control of the region.

A second wave of Ottoman domination occurred in the mid-nineteenth century, with the occupation of Hodeidah, and later, the Zaydi capital, Sa'da. As they had done in other parts of their empire, the Ottomans set about implementing their administrative system, including *nizamiye* courts.[17] However, by the 1880s, the Zaydi Imams of Yemen were acting semi-

[14] Robert D. Burrowes, *Historical Dictionary of Yemen* (Lanham, Maryland: The Scarecrow Press, 1995), 202.

[15] Harold Ingrams, *The Yemen: Imams, Rulers, & Revolutions* (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1964), 46.

[16] Roy Facey, "The Development of the Port of Aden," *The British Yemeni Society* November 1998, http://www.al-bab.com/bys/articles/facey98.htm (12 November 2013).

[17] *Nizamiye* refers to the secular courts established in the Ottoman Empire as a result of the *Tanzimat* reforms (1839-1876). The idea behind this secularization was that the old millet system worked against the new ideas of Ottomanism. By merging all ethnicities and religions together into a single system of law, the empire could modernize. Scholars are divided as to what the special treatment of Yemen during this period meant. On the one

autonomously, and presumptuously using titles which had traditionally been reserved for the Caliph of Islam. Confounded by his local strength, yet needing to check his overt ambition that appeared to reach beyond Yemen, the Ottomans compromised. Per the 1911 Treaty of Da'an, the Zaydi Imam al-Mutawakkil Yahya ibn Muhammad would be officially recognized as the leader of the Zaydi community, and entitled to implement Sharia law within his own courts in the highlands of Yemen. [18] With the losses of the war, the Ottoman alliance with Germany meant that it would relinquish its empire, and Yemen would no longer be under its jurisdiction. The Zaydi Imam from the highlands would now compete with leaders in the Tihama and the Hadramaut for control of Yemen.

There are three geographical approaches to deconstruct the history of Yemen, employing Benedict Anderson's notion of "imagined communities" as a vehicle in the writing of its past.[19] In adapting this interpretation to the study of Yemen, there are three distinct forms which exist in the literature.

(1) Yemen as an extension of the Ottoman Empire

Thomas Kuhn writes extensively about this, describing Ottoman imperial treatment of the Zaydi leaders of the Yemen highlands as distinct from and more autonomous than the centralized control witnessed in other Ottoman provinces. Kuhn depicts the Imam as quasi-independent, at least in terms of religious courts and his sway with tribal leadership. According to this theory, the

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hand, the Imam could be seen as a highly skilled leader whose historical religious leadership could not be overthrown lightly. On the other hand, others see the reversion back to Sharia law in Yemen as an acknowledgement of the backward nature of Yemeni society. See Thomas Kuhn's "Shaping and Reshaping Colonial Ottomanism: Contesting Boundaries of Difference and Integration in Ottoman Yemen, 1872-1919. "

[18] The title "Mutawakkil" means "one who has complete trust in God", and was a title traditionally reserved for the Caliph of Islam. However, others did use the title from time to time, including the Hashemite leader, Hussein, as well as the Zaydi Imams.

[19] Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (1983; reprint, New York: Verso, 2006), 155.

legacy of Ottoman imperialism continued even after the dissolution of the Ottoman Empire at the end of World War One, due to former officials of the Porte who chose not to return to Constantinople, and decided to stay in the highlands of Yemen. These professional administrators continued to craft the policies of Yemen as advisors to the Zaydi Imam in the interim between the World Wars, despite the complaints of the Resident at Aden, the Government of India, and the Foreign Office.

(2) Yemen as an extension of Imperial India

This historiographical understanding is tied to the work of John Willis, who-building on the foundations laid by Roger Owen and Robert Tignor- identified the "Indianization" of imperial methods and the creation of a separate history of the Indian Empire from that of the British Empire.[20] Based on the passage of the Interpretation Act of 1889, Willis extended the definition of imperial India beyond merely a geographical understanding to support the notion that "Aden and the Aden Protectorate constituted one of the westernmost parts of India."[21] Willis contends that the India Office's model of treaties with individual 'nabobs' on the subcontinent inspired an imperial template that was later applied to the Persian Gulf and southwest Arabia. It is this paradigm which at least in part explains the hierarchical nature of political relationships between the India Office, Aden, and the nine protected tribes in its hinterlands (Eastern and Western Protectorates) until 1937.[22] Some of the best sources for the early 20th century in Yemen

[20]See Robert L. Tignor, "The 'Indianization' of the Egyptian Administration under British Rule." *American Historical Review*, and Roger Owen, "The Influence of Lord Cromer's Indian Experience on British Policy in Egypt, 1883-1907." *Middle Eastern Affairs*.

[21] John M. Willis, "Making Yemen Indian: Rewriting the Boundaries of Imperial Arabia." *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 41, no. 1(2009): 24.

[22] In 1937 responsibility for the region was transferred from the India Office to the British Colonial Office, when Aden became a Crown Colony.

come from individuals connected in some tenuous way to the East India Company. There were many cartographers, geologists, missionaries, archaeologists, and ex-military types who recorded their accounts about their encounters with local chieftains. The Political Resident at Aden in 1917, James Stewart, stated "The neck of the British Empire is not merely the Suez Canal, but the whole length from Port Said to Aden. Anything which threatens this long line of communication from the eastern shores of the Red Sea or the approaches to that sea is of vital interest to our Empire and we cannot afford to see another Power established thereon."[23]

(3) Yemen subsumed within Red Sea history

The two previous models grouped Yemen into either the confines of Ottoman or British Indian imperial control, which divided Yemen up into political groups. In contrast, the final model juxtaposes Yemen against the backdrop of the entire Red Sea region, which allows a critique of Yemen history through an economic and cultural lens. Like the other models, it links Yemen to its past, but in commercial and religious ways, rather than politically.[24] This view imagines Yemen as unrestricted by the Red Sea, participating in a broader identity which spanned the territory from Ethiopia to the Persian Gulf. The exchange of goods such as coffee, qat and resins by Muslim, Jewish, and Christian merchants link it commercially to ports from Massawa to Tajura.

Without a doubt, the peoples of northeast Africa and southwest Arabia share a common past, predating the rise of Islam in the seventh century. Bilquis (also known as the Queen of Sheba/Saba) figures prominently in the mythology, literature, and monarchical rule on both sides

[23] CAB 24/143/AP 366, Telegram, 22 May 1917.

[24] Jonathan Miran , in his *Red Sea Citizens: Cosmopolitan Society & Cultural Change in Massawa*, links the commercial activities of Massawa to the Yemeni ports of Mocha and Hodeidah, as well as Aden.

of the Red Sea basin. During Roman times the commercial trade in myrrh, frankincense, and slaves linked the Red Sea peoples to broader trade networks which ranged from the Nabataens of the Levant to the Swahili Coast of Africa, and the expansive Indian Ocean network. Competition for markets in coffee and qat connected the region. Politically speaking, the Christian kingdom of Ethiopia was at times a foe (the Year of the Elephant) as well as a friend to the natives of the Arabian Peninsula.[25] Concerns regarding the monitoring of piracy are another shared feature of political entities surrounding the waterway, even today, as Somali pirates threaten the safety of sea traffic at the Gate of Tears.[26]

Yemen, like other nations along the littoral of the Red Sea, saw its share of popular Islam spread along the network that linked the trading ports. The 19th century saw a quickening of concern over new and unorthodox forms of Islam which stood in contrast to the orthopraxy of Muslims in India and the Levant.[27] These divergent and often radicalized Islamic groups, some of which bore a resemblance to the Christian factionalism which took place during the Protestant Reformation in Europe, were causes of consternation on both sides of the Red Sea. The 1885

[25] In the early days of Islam, Muhammad authorized a migration of some Muslims, the *Sahaba*, to escape persecution by the Quraysh, known as the First Migration to Abyssinia (Ethiopia). Tradition states that they found refuge with the Christian king of Axum. See Haggai Erlich, *Muslims and Christians in the Horn of Africa*, (N.p.: Lynne Riener Publishers, 2010), 1.

[26] This is one way to translate " Bab al-Mandeb," where the Arabian Peninsula nearly touches Africa, at the southernmost point of the Red Sea.

[27] While the term "orthodox" is an imperfect descriptor, it is useful in identifying some of the differences between Sunni and Shia teachings. Scholar Carole Hillenbrand uses the term in her "Islamic Orthodoxy or Realpolitick? Al-Ghazali's Views on Government." Briton Cooper Busch, in his *Britain, India, and the Arabs, 1914-1921*, refers to the Yemeni Sunnis as "orthodox," albeit using quotation marks. There is the inherent fear that Islamic orthodoxy will be conflated with Christian orthodoxy, but inserting "traditional" in its place can also lead to misunderstanding. As Sufi scholar Mark Sedgwick uses the term, "Traditionalism" is synonymous with Perennialism, a very different concept. Sunnis sometimes refer to Shias as *rafidi* (those who reject), so one has to ask, what is it that they are accused of rejecting? There were recognizable practices, teachings, and beliefs that came to be associated with the majority of Muslims, the Sunnis, and so a loose reference to these teachings as orthodox-despite the potential for confusion with the Christian use of the term-is meaningful. To the extent that Sunnis reject the hierarchy of Shia Imams, and the particular Shia hadith and Sunnah, as well as the special reverence awarded to Ali and his family, and the culture of suffering associated with Muharram, they constitute a larger, more traditional, belief system.

defeat of General Gordon in the Sudan at the hands of the self-proclaimed Mahdi, Muhammad Ahmad, served as the defining reference point across the region, not merely in the Anglo-Egyptian Condominium. The heightened fervor of millenarian belief seemed to suit the tense years following the "War to end all wars." From northern Arabia, the *salafi* influence of the Wahhabi permeated the porous borders with Yemen. Another substantive feature of binding religious ties (real or imagined) is the link between North African Sanussi Sufism and the Idris of Asir, which contributed to the religious diversity of southwest Arabia.

Those scholars who view Yemen as fitting into a broader Red Sea framework often employ economic deterministic explanations in the writing of 19th and early 20th century history. They view the importance of Yemen with regard to re-coaling stations for steam ships, the need for way stations for the pilgrimage traffic at Kamaran Island, between Africa and Mecca, as well as the traffic in slaves and arms from Djibouti to the Tihama littoral. These commercial connections served to bind Africans and Arabs together in ways that superseded tribal, confessional, and even political parameters, and contributed to the bedevilment of the Colonial and India Offices in the maintenance of security for all groups between the Bab al-Mandeb and the Suez Canal.

1.3 Historiographical Overview

Because of a quirk of timing, my research in Yemen was curtailed due to the phenomenon which spread across the Middle East known as the Arab Spring. I had traveled to Yemen in 2008 where I identified the Military Museum in Sanaa as a source of unorganized but potentially valuable information for my dissertation, located in dusty cardboard boxes in a storage room. The documents and photographs were not organized by time period, and would

require a second trip to identify and evaluate specific documents I needed for my research. As is now well-known, a series of revolutions swept across the region starting in December of 2010 in Tunisia and by August of 2011, President Saleh of Yemen was clinging to power as crowds protested in the streets of Sanaa. I changed my plans for a return trip and headed instead to London to continue my research in the British Library, St. Pancras, and the National Archives, Kew, Richmond Surrey. These unforeseen circumstances skewed the focus of my dissertation more towards British colonial history, as I had such limited access to the original Arabic documents I would have needed otherwise.

Some of the most intriguing records of Yemen were the nineteenth and early twentieth century travelers to the region, and they tend to fall into one of three categories. In the early period, when transportation and amenities were not as abundant and predictable, only the most intrepid of travelers made their way to what the Romans referred to as Arabia Felix (Happy Arabia). These tended to be men with a military background and/or many years of experience in the Indian Civil Service or Mesopotamia, such as G. Wyman Bury, Colonel Harold F. Jacob, and Harry St. John Bridger Philby. These primary source records often served official purposes for the empire, whether they were naturalist drawings funded by the Royal Geographic Society and documentation of samples of the flora and fauna generated for the British Museum, or records of spies intriguing with the local populations and tribal shaykhs.[28] Often they provide insight into the attitudes and conflicts involved in the decision-making processes taking place at the imperial level. Lord Cromer (Evelyn Baring) should be added to this list, a man whose experiences in India and North Africa helped to define over-arching imperialist attitudes regarding colonized

[28] In addition to carrying out his government responsibilities, Philby was an amateur ornithologist. Another account by a nature enthusiast is Dane Barclay Raunkiaer's *Through Wahhabiland on Camelback*.

Muslim populations. In his essay "England and Islam," he explores the impact that the declining Ottoman Empire had on fomenting discontent among British Muslim subjects.[29] So many young men trained in these two theaters of empire who later served in Arabia, and thus Baring's fears of rising Pan-Islamism and Pan-Arabism are relevant to a discussion of Yemen.[30]

These quasi-governmental chronicles are supplemented by accounts of private citizens who traveled to the region for personal reasons. Some were motivated by religious fervor as missionaries, such as the American, Samuel Zwemer. Although he is best known for his travels in eastern Arabia where he established hospitals and mission outposts in what is today known as Oman, he left his written impressions concerning the religious preoccupations of the peoples of southwest Arabia whom he encountered between 1891-1905. Others found inspiration for their creativity such as the poet Arthur Rimbaud, who lived at times in Aden and Ethiopia, while he made a living as a coffee merchant. Rosita Forbes, an English journalist whose self-aggrandizing writings provide a female's views of Yemen society during the early 20th century, expressed her frustration as a woman whose travel and access to native leaders was sometimes deliberately curtailed by the India Office.[31] The account of Ameen Rihani, the Lebanese-American writer who traveled throughout Yemen in the late 1920s, seems to be driven by the desire to document Arab nationalist activities, and reveals valuable social commentary along the way. In his *Around the Coasts of Arabia*, Rihani discusses subjects as diverse as the charisma of local leaders, the slave-trade, and local sentiment regarding the Pan-Islamic movement.

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[29] Evelyn Baring, *Political and Literary Essays,* 1908-1913 (Project Gutenberg EBook, Internet Archive/Million Book Project) 407, accessed 17 May 2012, http://www.gutenberg.org/ebooks/17320 .

[30] See Lord Cromer's *Modern Egypt* and *Political and Literary Essays, 1908-1913* for more insight into his attitude toward Muslims and the proper goals of imperialist endeavor.

[31] Rosita Forbes, "A Visit to the Idrisi Territory in 'Asir and Yemen." *Royal Geographical Society* 62 (1923): 271.

In addition to these personal accounts, there is a plethora of English-language primary source documents on Yemen, held at two different sites. The India Office Records are contained at the British Library at St. Pancras, London, covering the time period when Aden was governed as an extension of British India. Documents generated by the Colonial Office, Foreign Office, War Office (including the Royal Air Force and Red Sea Patrol) are to be found at the National Archives, Kew, Richmond, Surrey.

As stated previously access to what potentially could have been the most informative Arabic primary sources in the Military Museum in Sanaa was curtailed due to the Arab Spring.[32] Still, some valuable sources from the Arab viewpoint with regard to the religious history of Yemen come from the Sufi writings of Ahmad b. Idris, the grandfather of the post -World War One leader of Asir, Muhammad Idris.[33] Primary sources on Zaydi Shiism are hard to access as so much has not been translated from Arabic to any language, but two sources which furthered an understanding of Zaydi beliefs and practices and exist in translation from the Arabic and Persian are Muhammad b. Abdal-Karim Shahrastani's *Kitab al-Milal wa 'l-Nihal*, particularly the section on Muslim sects.[34] Carole Hillenbrand's translation of al-Tabari has been very helpful in placing the development of Zaydi Shiism in its proper historical context.[35] Two authors who

[32] Coincidentally, this is the site of Sir Gilbert Clayton's meeting with Imam Yahya in 1926, in which the Imam refused to sign the border agreement with Aden.

[33] Ahmad Ibn Idris, *The Letters of Ahmad Ibn Idris*, ed. And trans. Albrecht Hofheinz, Ali Salih Karrar, R. S. O'Fahey, Bernd Radtke and Einar Thomassen (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1993).

[34] Muhammad b. 'Abd al-Karim Shahrastani, Muslim Sects and Divisions: The Section on Muslim Sects in Kitab al-Milal wa 'l-Nihal, trans. A. K. Kazi and J. G. Flynn (London: Kegan Paul International, 1984), 132-138.

[35] Trans. And ed. Carole Hillenbrand, *The History of al-Tabari*, vol. 26, *The Waning of the Umayyad Caliphate: Prelude to Revolution A.D. 738-745/A.H.121-127* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1989), 36-37.

have attempted to access some of the unpublished primary Arabic sources to explain the evolution of Zaydism from the eighteenth century to the present are Bernard Haykel and Michael Cook, who both tackle the "Sunnisation of Zaydism," a process which is clearly entrenched in Yemeni society today.[36]

Before embarking on a project of this breadth, it is useful to review some of the general secondary surveys of the modern Middle East available, in order to understand the scope of Yemen's significance in the larger scheme of the inter-war period. Elizabeth Monroe's *Britain's Moment in the Middle East* provides a standard but dated Chatham House interpretation of events. David Fromkin's *A Peace to End All Peace: The Fall of the Ottoman Empire and the Creation of the Modern Middle East* is among the most coherent of this genre. Respected standard summary background reading include Albert Hourani's *A History of the Arab Peoples*, and Arthur Goldschmidt's *A Concise History of the Middle East.* None of these devote much attention to Yemen or Aden, but are helpful in framing the topic in proper chronological and geographical space.

Paul Dresch and Shelagh Weir are two of the most coherent historians in the genre of Yemen tribal history, whose contributions have largely been in the decipherment of the historical role of the patron-client relationships in Yemeni society.[37] The secondary accounts of contemporary historians of Yemen tend to focus either on the Ottoman period, concluding with

[36] Michael Cook's *Commanding Right and Forbidding Wrong in Islamic Thought* has an entire chapter devoted to the Zaydi sect. Likewise, Bernard Haykel writes about a specific Sunni cleric who oversaw this transition with significant relevance of the impact on the twentieth century in *Revival and Reform in Islam: The Legacy of Muhammad al-Shawkani*. Haykel contends that n nineteenth century Zaydi imams made the deliberate choice to make Zaydism more like Sunni Islam for the purpose of making leadership inherited, a feature which was foreign heretofore to Zaydi tradition.

[37] See Dresch's *Tribes, Government, and History in Yemen*, and Weir's *A Tribal Order: Politics and Law in the Mountains of Yemen.*

the Great War, or on the post -World War II period, during which time Yemen served as a proxy in the conflict between the Soviet Union and the United States known as the Cold War. Fred Halliday and Manfred Wenner are best considered together, as they each examine the two parts of Yemen prior to the 1990 unification. Halliday focuses on Marxism in South Yemen, after the deconstruction of the British colony at Aden in the post 1967 period while Wenner is best known for his scholarship on North Yemen under Saleh.[38] The secondary historiography of the region would not be complete without mentioning the contribution of Oxford scholar Robin Bidwell's editorial skills in his compilation of Arab Bureau records, including many interesting exchanges about the relations between various tribes and their historic influence with the British. His multi-volume guide to government ministers in the Arab world is a useful tool in the contemporary study of the Middle East.

Notwithstanding the contributions of the aforementioned historians, the interwar period in Yemen proper (as opposed to the Ottoman period or the later Crown Colony of Aden) is sparsely represented in academic literature in terms of quantity of publications as well as scope of focus. One of the few academics whose work covers this time period is Anne K. Bang, a historian associated with the University of Bergen (Sweden). In *The Idrisi State in Asir, 1906-1934*, Professor Bang provides a rich but narrow view of the Idris of Asir and his African Sufi heritage. Another historian who also focused on the Idrisi Emirate was John Baldry, a British English language teacher and well-respected, self-taught historian who lived in Yemen during the Civil War (1962-1970). He wrote monographs on the Italian influence in the Red Sea, as well as Soviet influence in the Yemen in the inter-war period. However, his lack of training as a historian (which is evident in some incomplete citations) and his demonstrated lack of language

[38] See Fred Halliday's *Revolution and Foreign Policy: The Case of South Yemen, 1967-1987* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990).

skills (he neither spoke nor read Arabic, Russian, or Italian) renders his work somewhat disappointing and frustrating for this researcher. The bulk of his unpublished work was left in the keeping of a fellow researcher.[39] Another narrow but relevant slice of historiography relates to the overlapping imperial entities who quibbled about who was in charge of British imperial oversight for the Middle East and what policies should be followed. The two historians who have established their niche are Helmut Mejcher,[40] and Timothy J. Paris.[41] Briton Cooper Busch also addresses overlapping jurisdictions in his maritime history of the area.[42]

Scholars of African history and religion have helped in underscoring the cultural continuities from around the Red Sea basin. In Gabriel Warburg's *Islam, Nationalism and Communism in a Traditional Society: the Case of Sudan*, the author details how *sayyids* exercised agency by parlaying the spiritual authority of their birthright to obtain power and prosperity from European imperial powers.[43]

The focus of this paper is on how the various British and Indian departments of government debated, determined and implemented policy of empire in the interwar period. To that end, the work of Aaron S. Klieman, Timothy Parsons, and Ephraim Maisel have provided enormous insight into the overlapping and contentious relationships between the various

[39] The researcher is Shelagh Weir. It appears that much of the support for Baldry's work came from the British-Yemeni Society. See Baldry's obituary published by the British Yemeni Society, accessed 13 July 2013. http://www.al-bab.com/bys/obits/baldry.htm.

[40] Helmut Mejcher, "British Middle East Policy, 1917-21: The Inter-Departmental Level," *Journal of Contemporary History* 8, no. 4 (1973), 81-101.

[41] Timothy J. Paris, "British Middle East Policy-making After the First World War: The Lawrentian and Wilsonian Schools," *The Historical Journal* 41, no. 3(1998), 773-793.

[42] Briton Cooper Busch, *Britain, India, and the Arabs, 1914-1921* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1971).

[43] A *sayyid* is a person who can claim descent from the prophet Muhammad. In Shia society, such as that which existed in Yemen, a sayyid who could trace his lineage back through Ali's sons, Hasan and Hussein, would hold a decided advantage and place them as possible contenders for the Imamship.

government agencies. For another English-language perspective, American diplomatic records have also been used. Finally, to understand the historical connections to contemporary concerns in Yemen, April Longley Alley and Gregory D. Johnsen provide the most coherent insights into post-Arab Spring Yemen.

1.4 Theoretical Framework

The Colonial Office of the British Government had years of experience in the exercise of power, and a map of the world from 1900 reveals that this little island nation hugging the western shore of Europe wielded impressive control over one-quarter of earth's population. This experience allowed Great Britain to refine the art of imperial discourse. Despite its protestations to the contrary in the early 20th century, it was not quite ready to bring an end to its colonial empire. Informed by Woodrow Wilson's aspirations of a new world of self-determination, but not willing to relinquish its sphere of influence on the Arabian Peninsula, officials instead experimented with a new panoptic template for Yemen. Once made, this decision inadvertently and simultaneously resurrected ideological debates which had been waged in the previous century between Conservatives and Liberals, and between those with African and Indian colonial orientations.

In southwest Arabia, the British had long been desirous for control. In the late nineteenth century, Arabists such as William Gifford Palgrave opined that "It is time to fill up this blank in the map of Asia. . .at whatever risks, we will now endeavor; either the land before us shall be our tomb, or we will traverse it in its fullest breadth, and know what it contains from shore to shore."[44] The war years brought the opportunity for this exploration. Between 1914-1918, many

[44] William Gifford Palgrave, *Central Arabia*, cited in Harry St. John Philby, *The Heart of Arabia: A Record of Travel & Exploration*, vol. II (London: Constable & Co.), 132.

scholars, scientists, soldiers, spies, and diplomats ventured into Arabia, north and south. Northern Arabia was understood to hold imperial significance because of its two important religious cities, Mecca and Medina. Control (or at least, influence) would be essential in order to maintain proper relations with the Muslims living under the British Raj in India. However, southwest Arabia was a different matter. There was no overt religious relevance to the region. The wealth of the past which had brought it to paramountcy in the ancient and medieval world had been obtained from the trade in spices and aromatics, neither of which figured prominently in the economy of the early twentieth century. Believing that there were no natural resources to exploit, the British maintained outwardly that they had no desire to colonize Yemen.[45] The real value of the area was in its strategic location, especially in the Tihama region along the Red Sea coast. The Eastern and Western Protectorates, the territory bordering the Indian Ocean, to the east of Aden, could be adequately maintained through annual stipends to the local shaykhs. Thus, the outward manifestation of power by direct occupation was not necessary to assert control.

Yet, covertly, the British needed to control Yemen's interior. Competing imperial powers and the trade in arms and slaves were just a few of the ongoing concerns in Yemen in the aftermath of the war. The challenge was how to monitor and control what was going on in Yemen without the expense of full-fledged empire. This paper is an examination of how the British implemented a type of panopticon at Aden, in order to observe the activities of the inhabitants anonymously and continuously.

The notion of the panopticon is traced to the late eighteenth century utilitarian theorist Jeremy Bentham, who envisioned it as a possible way to reform penal institutions. Operating from a central tower, with one-way windows looking out at an enclosed population, the prison

[45] While oil was discovered in Persia (Iran) in 1908, it was not until 1938 that it was discovered in Saudi Arabia. Yemen's oil deposits appear to be more modest than her neighbors, although some argue that the presence of oil is underreported. See http://yemenpost.net/Detail123456789.aspx?ID=3&SubID=6379.

guards could monitor the prisoners' activities. When observed parties knew their movements and actions were being continuously tracked, they were more likely to comply all of the time, leading to a more stable and law-abiding population. For effective functioning, two core features had to be present. First, the panopticon had to exercise its gaze continuously and subtly. Second, the proper functioning of the system depended on individuals who would self-monitor, or, in the absence of this, peers who would report those who failed to comply with the rules of the system. Later, Michel Foucault elaborated upon this concept of panopticism, but articulated a more sinister, less-humane motive and outcome. In Foucault's panopticon, there exists distrust, suspicion, and collaboration with the enemy in the tower. Foucault discusses the changed nature of power. Inherent to his model, the proper functioning of the system depended on individuals who would self-monitor, or, in the absence of this, peers who would report those who failed to comply with the rules of the system Consider Robert Gellately's work, *Backing Hitler: Consent and Coercion in Nazi Germany, 1933-1945*, in which he suggests that the German Gestapo were relatively few in number, but relied on regular Germans to inform on their neighbors.[46] According to Foucault in *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*:

> Traditionally, power was what was seen, what was shown, and what was manifested...Disciplinary power, on the other hand, is exercised through its invisibility; at the same time it imposes on those whom it subjects a principle of compulsory visibility. In discipline, it is the subjects who have to be seen. Their visibility assures the hold of the power that is exercised over them. It is this fact of being constantly seen, of being able always to be seen, that maintains the disciplined individual in his subjection. And the examination is the technique by which power, instead of emitting the signs of its potency, instead of imposing its mark on its subjects, holds them in a mechanism of objectification. In this space of domination,

[46] Robert Gellately, *Backing Hitler: Consent and Coercion in Nazi Germany* (London: Oxford University Press, 2002). Gellately applies Foucault's notion of panopticism to Nazi Germany, wherein government bureaucrats and average citizens were willing to inform on their neighbors, thereby collaborating with the regime.

> disciplinary power manifests its potency, essentially by arranging objects. The examination is, as it were, the ceremony of this objectification.[47]

It is clear that Government of India officials believed they could assert the necessary power over the Yemen to maintain safety of imperial interests without assuming the cost of direct occupation or political annexation. Through the lens of Foucault and the control of monetary stipends, the Resident could study all parties and their activities from the panopticon of Steamer Point.[48] The few officials at Aden believed they could manipulate the situation in southwest Arabia in their favor by playing the Idris and the Imam against each other, and relying on them to report the actions of the other. The use of air power was also a way to observe and control the population from an impersonal distance. The Government of India and the British Foreign Office believed they had sufficiently divided them and could therefore better control the situation. What they had not bargained for was the agency that each of these leaders exhibited, drawing upon the power of their religious heritage for political support. The panopticon began to break down as the two major religious factions gradually became more closely aligned in terms of judicial courts, interpretation of holy texts, and leadership. These processes began in the nineteenth century and continued even after war's end, despite imperial attempts to divide Yemen.

In the post-World War I period, Great Britain and the India Office were concerned with anything that could potentially disrupt traffic and communication along the Red Sea. By 1917 Bolshevism had triumphed in Russia, resulting in the creation of the Soviet Union. The communist belief in an international revolution of the proletariat was destabilizing, and posed a

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[47] Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison* , trans. Alan Sheridan, 2nd ed. (New York: Vintage Books, 1991).

[48] Steamer Point refers to the location in Aden where the recoaling of ships took place and where the original military garrison was located.

new threat. The presence of Soviet merchants in Sanaa generated immense paperwork from Aden. Another development which called for constant vigilance was the pilgrimage of Indian Muslims to Mecca, and making sure that the pilgrims were not exposed to dangerous diseases or revolutionary ideas.[49] Following the end of the Great War, a number of former Ottoman soldiers stayed behind in Yemen to offer their services as advisors and mercenaries to the Zaidi Imam, adding another layer of disquiet to the Aden Resident's situation. Additionally, large numbers of slaves and armaments were trafficked between the western coast of the Red Sea and Yemen, offending the morality of many and acting in direct violation of international agreements of long-standing. Nineteenth century attempts to stop the slave trade had opened the door to shared responsibility among the Europeans, which took on threatening overtones in the immediate aftermath of the war. This led to competition from France and Italy as these two imperial competitors charged forward into negotiations with tribal shaykhs who had chosen not to enter into alliance with Aden.

The challenge was to manage all of these issues without having to make the financial and personnel commitment that an occupying force would entail. According to Foucault, Panopticism addresses three essential concerns:

> [F]irstly, to obtain the exercise of power at the lowest possible cost (economically, by the low expenditure it involves; politically, by its discretion, its low exteriorization, its relative invisibility, the little resistance it arouses); secondly, to bring the effects of this social power to their maximum intensity and to extend them as far as possible, without power with the output of the apparatuses (educational, military, industrial or medical) within which it is exercised; in short, to increase both the docility and the utility of all the elements of the system.[50]

[49] Estimates are as high as 5% of the Indian population and 7% of the British Somaliland population who perished in the 1918 influenza pandemic. See Richard Pankhurst, *An Introduction to the Medical History of Ethiopia* (Trenton: Red Sea Press, 1990).

[50] Foucault, *Discipline and Punish,* 218.

The mistake made by Aden officials is that they assumed that the population of Yemen could be controlled from Aden without its direct occupation. As Foucauldian scholar Arnold Davidson stated, "power [should not be viewed]. . . as the homogeneous domination of one group or class over another, but as a net-like, circulating organization."[51] The implication is that power does not emanate from the top downwards, but is mutually dependent on individuals at all levels, even from those perceived to be subalterns. Aden never succeeded in obtaining the level of cooperation from the Yemeni population that it assumed the panopticon would produce.

[51] Arnold Davidson, *Foucault and His Interlocutors* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996), 226.

CHAPTER TWO

THE POLITICS OF THE PANOPTICON

2.1 Preparation of Imperial Leaders

In general, the individual bureaucrats who staffed the many offices of empire came from the upper-classes, a culture that had a reasonable amount of exposure to Islam (flawed and incomplete though it was) through travel and education. The post-colonial theorist Edward Said documented the biases of this class in his seminal work *Orientalism*, in which he faulted imperialists for framing their political discourse through the filter of their erroneous and prejudiced understanding of the culture of the colonized, "the Other."[52] Certainly there were periods in history when European writers and artists depicted the prophet of Islam in a barbarous, uncultured light. The iconic image of the sword-wielding Saracen on jihad enslaving Christians and destroying their churches dominated European perceptions from the period of the Crusades forward to the beginning of the Great War. Nevertheless, at times there appeared an alternative narrative, such as during the Renaissance, where some Muslims were depicted through the positive imagery of scholars and scientists, reflecting the cross-cultural pollination which took place during the seven hundred years in which there was a Muslim presence in Europe.[53] Perhaps spawned by new translations of the Qur'an and by Enlightenment sentiment, some European writers flirted with a more accepting view of Islam and its prophet throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. While this view was never accepted in the main-stream, a public school education nevertheless would have included familiarity with thinkers such as Hegel, Goethe and

[52] Edward Said, Orientalism (New York: Vintage Books, 1978), 204.

[53] A ready example of this would be Raphael's depiction of Averroes, situated alongside western thinkers such as Plato in *The School of Athens*.

Carlyle, within whose works Muhammad has more positive attributes.[54] "Mahomet . . .was not a sensual man. We shall err widely if we consider this man a common voluptuary, intent. . .on base enjoyments. . ..No emperor with his tiaras was obeyed as this man in a cloak of his own clouting. .I find something of a veritable Hero necessary for that, of itself."[55]

In addition to the literature and the art of the day, officers of empire were influenced by their imperial forbears, who had several centuries of contact with Muslims, especially in India. An example of this would be Evelyn Baring, Lord Cromer, who-while best known for his financial subjugation of Egypt as Consul-General between 1883-1907-actually got his start as the private secretary to Lord Northbrook, the Viceroy of India. His attitude can be taken to characterize the attitudes of a generation of imperialists in Islamic lands. He said that it was dangerous business to "trifle with the religious belief of a people."[56] Yet, trifle he and other imperialists did, especially in India, where Muslims and Hindus were pitted against each other in the age-old game of "divide and conquer." The problem, however, was that while India presented a prime opportunity to employ two different religious groups against each other, Yemen appeared on the surface to be homogeneous. While there were acknowledgements of minor differences between the Sunnis of the south and the Zaydi Shias of the north, it was clear that the British knew very little about Zaydi Shias, having never encountered them in their empire before. The standard policy of exploiting confessional differences in Yemen was tabled. Instead, the British decided to focus on tribal differences, a method which they had applied in the

[54] Minou Reeves, *Muhammad in Europe: A Thousand Years of Western Myth-Making* (New York: New York University Press, 2000), 202.

[55] Thomas Carlyle, *On Heroes, Hero-Worship and the Heroic in History* (London, 1888), 65.

[56] Cromer, "The Government of Subject Races," *Political and Literary Essays, 1908-1913*, [Project Gutenberg] accessed on December 17, 2013 p 28. http://www.gutenberg.org/ebooks/search/?query=evelyn+baring.

Northwest Frontier Province of India.[57] Thus, while the "divide and conquer" strategy was still being utilized, the demarcation lines were etched along tribal rather than confessional boundaries.

Very few Europeans had had any exposure to this peculiar mix of Muslim sects before the early 19th century. It was in 1839 that the East India Company made landfall at Aden, seizing power under questionable circumstances. That is not to say that there was a dearth of information on Islam, or that career military and civil service types were ignorant of the history of Islam. Indeed, there had been long and steady contacts with Muslim populations throughout their expansive empire, particularly in India. In the subcontinent, with which they had one of the longest imperial relationships, the India Office propped up the ruling Muslim minority in the Mughal Empire in the face of an overwhelming Hindu majority. This Sunni version of Islam with its heavy bahkti Hindu influence was the initial introduction to Islamic practice for many military personnel and civil servants of the Empire. Others acquired their exposure to Islam via careers built on experience acquired in the Levant, especially during the days leading up to and following the Balfour Declaration of 1917, negotiating with Zionists and Palestinians in the former Ottoman province of greater Syria.[58] A third influence came from those who had begun their service in the Colonial Office in Cairo, and migrated south to Khartoum under the Anglo-Egyptian Condominium in the Sudan. While each of these experiences helped groom a class of civil and military leaders to work among Muslims, none of the three regional career paths could

[57] The ethnic Pashtuns in the Northwest Frontier Province of India (today's Pakistan) are divided up into numerous tribes, including the Durranis, Wazirs, and Mahsuds. See Ty L. Groh, "Ungoverned Spaces: The Challenges of Governing Tribal Societies" (master's thesis, Naval Postgraduate School, 2006), 264. Kindle Edition.

[58] In his 1995 dissertation, The Anglo-Egyptian Sudanese Influence in the Occupied Enemy Territory Administration, South, 1917-1920,"Richard Bennett argues that the leaders of this second group-the Levantine specialists-were actually former Sudan hands who brought their expertise honed in Khartoum to Palestine.

have prepared them adequately for understanding the religious nuances unique to the Yemen. Indeed, the case can be made that it was precisely their narrow understandings of Islam which they took from these other regions and attempted to superimpose on the Yemeni population which contributed to a failure of policy there.

The Arab Bureau documents reveal that British military and Foreign Office bureaucrats paid careful attention to the machinations of the religious rivalries that existed in the Yemen on the eve of the Great War. However, like the Ottomans, they approached their dealings with the Zaydis and their Imam pragmatically. According to Bernard Haykel, by the turn of the nineteenth century the differences between the Zaydis and the Sunnis had dwindled significantly, with power devolving to local lords.[59] There were still uprisings, and Kuhn is particularly helpful by providing insight into how the Ottomans understood Zaydi revolts in the periods of 1891-93, and again in 1904-07. What they came to appreciate is that the uprisings had less to do with specific Zaydi beliefs about authority and leadership, and more to do with their discontent with excessive taxation and their Red Sea rivals, Britain and Italy.[60]

2.2 The End of the War & Caliphate Concerns

Chaotic situations often lead to waves of instability which reverberate beyond tribal or national borders. The post-war situation in Arabia was intimately intertwined with events in India, due to its large Muslim population and India's special role in the administration of Aden,

[59] Bernard Haykel, *Revival and Reform in Islam: The Legacy of Muhammad al-Shawkani* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 231.

[60] Kuhn, p. 318

considered an outpost of the Indian Empire.[61] With regard to India and Arabia, one of the larger questions at play for the British in the immediate aftermath of the war was what would happen to the Caliphate and how would that outcome impact the large Muslim population in British India? With King George V considered the "Greatest Mohammedan ruler in the world"[62] via his position as the monarch over 70 million Muslims in India and Egypt, and with the Ottoman Sultan soon to be stripped of his religious and temporal powers, the British saw themselves as having a chance to control their Muslim subjects by positioning the next Caliph of Islam. The arrogance of this belief is underscored by a secret Cabinet memo in early 1917, "It may be that the responsible Indian Moslems imagine that, as the British practically invented or revived the Caliphate of the Ottomans, no people have a better right to decide the fate of the Turkish capital."[63] Yet, even the Government of India officials who made these statements realized the necessity of overtly keeping their distance, making it appear that the choices in leadership emanated from the native peoples themselves. The Foreign Office advocated for an Arab leader, believing that the selection of a caliph from the Arabian Peninsula was a strategic decision: a way to implement cost effective "soft" power without an expensive occupying force. In those early months following the November, 1918 armistice, Foreign Secretary, Lord Curzon met with multiple committees to articulate a policy which would allow for local autonomy for Yemen, albeit within a scope of influence from Aden and Cairo. It became clear that there would not be a single, unified Arab state, but it was still not certain what the precise nature of the relationships with the four leaders of Arabia would look like, or if one of them would be the new Caliph.

[61] The Interpretation Act of 1889 stated that India included "any territories of any Native Prince or Chief under the suzerainty of His Majesty, exercised through the Governor General of India or through any Governor or other officer subordinate to the Governor General of India." Interpretation Act, Section 18 (5), quoted in *Laws of the Aden Protectorate* (Aden, Yemen: Government of the Colony of Aden, 1939), 26.

[62] Ibid.

[63] CAB/24/143, p. 79. Secret Memorandum, February 28, 1917.

2.3 The Committee Decisions and the Role of Lord Curzon

Historians universally acknowledge that the delineation of the map of the modern Middle East dates back to the conclusion of World War I and the agreements through which the Great Powers negotiated the issues resulting from the collapse of the Ottoman Empire. The concept of mandates emanated from Woodrow Wilson's Fourteen Points, which called for self-determination of states, and called for the creation of the League of Nations. In the several treaties which emanated from Paris (1919), San Remo (1920), Sevres (1920) and Lausanne (1923), contending forms of imperialism emerged. As part of the over-arching plan by the newly-established League of Nations, Class-A Mandates were specifically designed to transition former Ottoman lands into independent statehood, while Class-B Mandates were designed to dispense with former German colonies in Africa and Asia. The British saw the creation of a Mandate system in Palestine and Iraq, intended to be monitored until such time as those areas could maintain independent governments on their own. The French reinforced their presence in Lebanon and Syria, where they had developed a reputation as the caretakers of the Christian communities there even before the war.

In Arabia proper, the policy was less coherent. British officials from the Foreign Office and the Arab Bureau hoped to make good on their promise of reward to the Sunni Sherif Hussein of the Hijaz, guardian of Islam's holiest sites, for his support and the support of his sons against the Ottoman Turks. At the same time, officials from the India Office provided similar words of encouragement to Ibn Saud of Nejd, a rival of Hussein on the Peninsula, and former Ottoman client, who was an ardent supporter of a puritanical form of Islam known as Wahhabism.[64] In like fashion, various British agents were carrying out another contest of sorts in southwest

[64] Ibn Saud won this contest, eventually combining his Nejdi kingdom with that of the Hijaz, forming the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia in 1932.

Arabia between the Zaydi Shia leader Yaha Muhammad Hamid al-Din (Imam Yahya), who resided in the mountains of Yemen, and Sayyid Muhammad ibn Ali al-Idris of Asir, a descendant of a respected Moroccan Sufi thinker, and adherent of a popular form of Islam that had spread on the Arabian Peninsula through the teachings of Muhammad al-Sanussi. With at least four choices just in Arabia, one Aden official stated that "The Turks have gone, and chaos reigns supreme in the Arabian Peninsula. Each Arab potentate is 'playing for his own bat.' Cohesion and co-operation have gone by the board. There is indeed no Arab 'side' and no Arab captain."[65]

With an Arabian mandate too costly to administer, and publicly too unpopular for officials to champion, it was understood that the forward policy of empire was now in retreat in Yemen. Policy makers would have to find another solution for the Arabian Peninsula.[66]

> We therefore hope that the rights of the inhabitants of Yemen and the post of its Imam will be recognized as before and that any decision or arrangement concluded in regard to Yemen without our knowledge or consent or that of the powers should be considered of no value in official political circles. . . We will object to and contradict every arrangement we consider detrimental to our political interests, authority and the welfare of our country.[67]

The Imam Yahya penned these words in 1919, as the representatives of the Great Powers were meeting in Paris to discuss the peace settlement. Ever the confident leader, he was offended that the recent victors in Europe were discussing the future of his nation without his input.[68] Asserting his authority as the King of Yemen, he engaged in a letter-writing campaign by which

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[65] Harold F. Jacobs, *Kings of Arabia: The Rise and Set of the Turkish Sovranty in the Arabian Peninsula* (London: Mills & Boon, 1923), 226.

[66] One of the key indicators of the unpopularity of extending imperial rule (known as the 'forward policy') in the Arabian Peninsula was the climate of the press in London. Lord Northcliffe's *Daily Mail* provided a steady stream of anti-imperialist propaganda to the working class while the *Times* of London performed the same function for the professional class.

[67] FO 608/81 Peace Treaty 1919, Letter from Imam Yahya to the Spanish ambassador in London, pages 3-4.

[68] Indeed, the only Arab spokesperson present was Faisal, son of Sherif Hussein, who was allotted a mere twenty minutes to present his argument for an Arab state.

he hoped to secure a favorable outcome for his people. However, the direction for Arabian policy taken by Great Britain at Paris had already been discussed by an obscure committee at a meeting held on December 18, 1918.[69] The composition, personalities, and differing agendas of this committee foreshadowed the problems Britain would encounter in Arabia, and specifically in Yemen, for the next decade and a half.[70]

The formation of British policy for the Middle East had never been centralized in a single governmental department. During the course of the Great War, there were divergent visions as to the nature of Great Britain's role in the Arabian Peninsula, and disagreements as to which bureaucratic body could best facilitate those future goals. At various times British agencies, based in four different cities (Bombay, Aden, Cairo, and London) established treaties with the four strongest leaders (Sherif Hussein, Ibn Saud, the Idris of Asir, and the Imam Yahya). The disputes regarding whose strategy to use and which leader to pursue continued and contributed to the problems which followed the conclusion of the war. The issue of Yemen was subsumed within the broader questions of British policy in the entire Middle East, known as the Eastern Question. In other words, what was to be done with the former Ottoman territories, and who would exercise the power to make these decisions?

The problem of conflicting policies erupted during the war itself, leading to the establishment of the Arab Bureau within the Cairo Intelligence Department of the Foreign Office. Created in 1916, it was an attempt to consolidate experts on the region into a single body in order to integrate and synchronize a more seamless process for policy-making. However, the leading figures from the Bureau, such as T. E. Lawrence, David Hogarth, and Gilbert Clayton,

[69] CAB 27/24/EC44.

[70] Despite the best efforts of the Foreign Office and the India Office, Aden and the Imam would not conclude a treaty defining territorial borders until 1934, per the Treaty of Sanaa.

were limited to intelligence-gathering. Lawrence's famed attempt to over-step this mandate and to craft post-war plans with Sherif Hussein of the Hijaz (seemingly unaware of the controversial Sykes-Picot Agreement) is a notable exception, and underscores the type of inter-agency conflicts witnessed later in Yemen.[71] The placement of two of Hussein's sons on the thrones of Trans-Jordan and Iraq, however, was a mere consolation prize, as Hussein never became the "King of the Arabs" as he thought he had been promised by Lawrence.

As a result, in the aftermath of the war and the disbandment of the Arab Bureau, Great Britain experimented with different committees, continuing to seek ways to bring together the policy-making of the various agencies involved to develop a single, cost-effective, imperial plan. This would be of crucial concern in southwest Arabia, where Britain desired to maintain the safety of transportation and communication links without surrendering her hegemony to her imperial competitors, Italy, France, and Germany.[72] Crafting a path forward that would accomplish this and maintain harmonious inter-agency relations was the priority. Based on the ultimate actions of these government entities, it appears that the Wilsonian-inspired goal of self-determination was of somewhat lesser importance than the maintenance of empire.

Even before the war ended, the search for a unified policy began. Between March and July of 1917, the War Cabinet established the Mesopotamian Administration Committee to discuss a possible template for the role of India in the future Middle East, which India saw as one great big buffer zone for its empire, and market for its commercial goods. The geographical

[71] The Sykes-Pico Agreement was a secret agreement between British and French officials as to how the Middle East would be carved up between the two powers at war's end. It was in direct conflict with what Sherif Hussein believed about British intentions conveyed to him through T.E.Lawrence and his correspondence with Sir Henry McMahon, the High Commissioner of Egypt. Until the Russians released the details of the agreement, Hussein believed the Great Powers were going to award him an Arab nation in the greater Middle East as recompense for his loyalty and service fighting the Ottoman Empire.

[72] The role of Germany diminished significantly as a result of the peace settlement, but her planned Berlin to Baghdad railway had created a tremendous amount of anxiety in the Colonial Office before and during the War.

region covered by this Committee included not only Mesopotamia, but both sides of the Persian Gulf, the Arabian Peninsula, and across to the Red Sea. This group gave way to the Middle East Committee and then to the Eastern Committee by 1918. The Eastern Committee expanded its scope to include Persia, the Caucuses, and the Ukraine, reflecting the broader concerns India held regarding the protection of her empire from Russia, a nation which had recently undergone the Bolshevik Revolution. It is this committee which submitted its proposals to the peace delegation in Paris. The opinions and policies of George Nathaniel Curzon loomed large, as he chaired all three committees.

The participation of Curzon was significant. Formerly the Viceroy of India (1905), by 1919 he was serving as Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs. His resume seemed to have the requisite background to bring disparate views together. It is useful in this context to think of the Indian Empire as separate from the British Empire, in that there existed two separate governments and cabinets. As both empires were simultaneously expanding into the same territories, it should not be surprising that conflicts erupted over territorial control. Due to his experience in both spheres, it was a priority to Curzon that the institutional dissonance which characterized the policy-making procedures for the Middle East be eliminated. With that in mind, he oversaw the two previous committees charged with formulating post-war policy for the region.[73] As Chairman of the new Eastern Committee, Curzon seemed to fear most a policy whose trajectory would further either pan-Islamism or pan-Arabism, as these could undermine the interests of both the British and Indian Empires.

> . . .if we do anything prematurely to build up a great Arab State under a single head we may rue the day, and in the future we might find there had been evolved a great community, though not necessarily under a single head, based upon principles of a

[73] For more detailed information about the problems of these committees, see Ephraim Maisel's *The Foreign Office and Foreign Policy, 1919-1926* (Brighton, 1994), 204-227.

> fanatical and very likely an aggressive form of Islam, which might become a serious danger.[74]

In his position as committee chairperson, Curzon would have been especially alert to the impact that the surrender in 1918 of the Ottoman Sultan and Caliph, Muhammad VI, had on the Indian population. The Khilafat Movement began in India at this time, comprised of the sizeable minority of Muslims on the sub-continent. It was part of a wider expression of discontent with British control, and though a Muslim movement, it was even supported by prominent Hindu leaders, such as Gandhi. By 1919, this group was worried that the British would impose an Arab Caliph on *Dar al-Islam*, while the Khilafat Movement lobbied for a Turkish one. Sitting in the committee meetings, Curzon was aware that any Muslim dissatisfaction over the decision as to whom should lead Islam could readily ignite upheavals that would spread from India westward across the entire Middle East. Several Arab leaders entertained dreams of becoming the next Caliph, and some of those were owed favors from their wartime efforts, including Sherif Hussein and the Idris of Asir. Others, such as Imam Yahya had partnered with the Turks during the war, yet still indicated an interest in becoming the spiritual leader of all Islam. Ultimately the decision on this issue was not made by the Eastern Committee, but by Mustapha Kemal, the secular leader of the new Republic of Turkey, who first separated the Sultanate from the Caliphate in 1922, and then abolished both offices in 1924. Many Muslim Indians blamed the Indian Government for the loss of the Caliphate, leading to a rupture in relations between the Muslim League and the Deobandi *ulema*, which quickly joined forces with Gandhi and the Congress Party.[75]

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[74] Lord Curzon, cited in "'The Safety of Our Indian Empire': Lord Curzon and British Predominance in the Arabian Peninsula, 1919", *Middle Eastern Studies*, Vol. 33, No. 3, p. 492.

[75] Abdul Rauf, "The British Empire and the Mujahidin Movement in the N.W.F.P.of India, 1914-1934." *Islamic Studies* 44, no. 3 (2005): 413.

Foreign Secretary Curzon and the Prime Minister did not always get along, but they often agreed on the direction of policy. During the war years Lloyd George had lost confidence in the professional diplomatic corps whose job was to excel at compromise and ambiguity, and viewed Curzon with disdain. With the war's end, some thought that these skills would once again be valued. One such person was Lord Hardinge, Permanent Under-Secretary of the Foreign Office. To prepare for the upcoming peace settlement, Lord Hardinge, organized a collection of area experts known as the Political Intelligence Department (PID) to advise on Middle Eastern issues. Career diplomats such as Lord Louis Mallet and scholars such as Arnold Toynbee contributed to the research. Hardinge, who had previously served as Under-Secretary before a stint as Viceroy of India, was returning to his former office with something to prove, and he hoped to assist in restoring to the Foreign Office its former prestigious reputation.[76] Therefore this reliance upon committee-based decisions, although well-intentioned, did nothing to unify the various stakeholders with regard to the region.

2.4 The Aden Resident's Dilemma

> The Resident at Aden was responsible to no less than four separate and distinct authorities, and everyone who had held the post had emphasized how impossible it was to achieve either economy or efficiency under such conditions.[77]

[76] Erik Goldstein, "British Peace Aims and the Eastern Question: The Political Intelligence Department and the Eastern Committee, 1918." *Middle Eastern Studies* 23, no. 4 (1987): 419. The connection to the Deoband is relevant because it was this group's teachings which later influenced the Taliban in Afghanistan, and who saw a fellow traveler in Osama bin Laden, who himself had been influenced by another puritanical Islamist group, the Wahhabis of Saudi Arabia. While the Deoband claim to be Sufis, and actively try to distance themselves from extremism, fatwas against photography, women in western dress, and Salman Rushdie have led many to question this. See MD. Ali,"Deoband Hits Back, Rejects "Baseless" Charge of Radicalizing Muslim Youth." http://www.deoband.net/4/post/2011/10/deoband-hits-back-rejects-baseless-charge-of-radicalizing-muslim-youth.html (accessed 1 December 2013).

[77] CAB 24/182 Extract from Draft Minutes of the 218th Meeting of the Committee of Imperial Defense, November 25, 1926. p.2.

At the time of World War One, Aden was considered a province of India, and Residents were directly responsible to the Government of India, albeit at times managed by the India Office, London.[78] Like the Zaydi Imam, the Resident of Aden at times found it difficult to understand what the official government stance was toward Yemen, or even which government predominated, the Government of India or the British Government. To fully appreciate the lack of a unified vision for post-War Arabia, and specifically for Yemen, one must understand the balkanized government entities which were tasked with decision-making.

The dissonance characteristic of the inter-war period had roots in the nineteenth century Gladstone versus Disraeli-style debates concerning empire. Ever the reluctant imperialist, William Gladstone defended non-intervention and relied upon British merchants to maintain a commercial empire. Contrastingly, the conservative Benjamin Disraeli advocated for a more direct form of imperial expansion, such as the purchase of stock in the Suez Canal in 1875. With regard to Middle East policy in the post-World War One period, Gladstone's ideals would find appeal with men such as T. E. Lawrence and Gilbert Clayton, non-interventionist intelligence officers who worked for the Foreign Office. As for Disraeli's ideological descendants, India Office official John Evelyn Shuckburgh, Deputy Under Secretary of the British Colonial Office , and Arnold Wilson, political officer and Mesopotamian and Indian administrator, advocated for a more direct, interventionist role.

It is true that maintaining empire was expensive and increasingly unpopular back home, leading to inflammatory protests on the streets of London and bellicose parliamentary debates. However, the end of World War I saw Britain reject promised independence to many colonized people, including Indians, many of whom fought bravely on the Western Front with the belief

[78] In 1937 the status of Aden changed when it became a British Crown Colony.

that independence would be forthcoming at the conclusion of the war. It is against this backdrop of controversy that the Aden Resident had to implement policy.

2.5 Interdepartmental Conflict

The bipolar nature of vision for Yemen gradually became apparent in the post-World War I period as imperial bases of power in Egypt and India forged conflicting strategies for Southwest Arabia. On the one hand, the Government of India saw Yemen as an extension of its own empire by maintaining safe travel and communication as it guarded the entrance to the Red Sea at Aden, while on the other hand, the Colonial and Foreign Offices in Whitehall and Cairo saw the end of the war as an opportunity to shore up a competing base of power for a 'Cairo Viceroyalty.' Historian Timothy J. Paris suggests that this rift between the Foreign Office and the India Office emerged even before the end of the War. Paris explains how the Foreign Office's support for the Sharifian family of Hejaz conflicted with the goals of the India Office, and their lack of enthusiasm for a family thought to be usurpers by educated Indian Muslims.[79] This background is helpful in understanding the continuity of this schism as it played out in Yemen after the end of the war. It escalated in importance in March of 1924, when Kemal Ataturk abolished the office of the Ottoman Caliphate.

The hierarchy for India had three distinct bodies in the chain of command. At the top of the chain was the India Office in London, whose Secretary of State for India (Indian Secretary) was a Cabinet-level position. The office was created after the Indian Rebellion of 1857, when the British Government took direct control from the East India Company. Its responsibility included not only oversight for India, but a fluid number of neighboring areas. During World

[79] Timothy J. Paris, "British Middle East Policy-Making after the First World War: The Lawrentian and Wilsonian Schools," *The Historical Journal* 41, no. 3 (1998), 773.

War One, the Indian Secretary was Austen Chamberlain, half-brother of future Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain. The partitioning of India in 1947 into Hindu and Muslim states brought the permanent closure of the India Office. Just below the India Office was the Government of India, led by the Governor-General, or Viceroy, who in the early twentieth century moved his headquarters from Calcutta to New Delhi. His purview included responsibility for India, Burma, and Aden. The Government of India Act of 1919 created a dyarchy, whereby the Viceroy was forced to divide his powers with independent princes in some categories, such as agriculture and education, while retaining oversight for the more strategic categories of the military, foreign affairs, and communications.[80] For the period focused upon in this research, Charles Hardinge occupied the position of Viceroy from 1910-1916, and was succeeded by Frederic Thesiger, Lord Chelmsford (1916-1920) and Rufus Isaacs, the Earl of Reading (1921-1926). It is worth noting that many individuals who served in India continued their careers in the Foreign or Colonial Office, such as Lord Curzon.

Organizationally situated secondary to both the India Office and the Government of India was the Aden Residency, which, from 1858 until Aden separated from India and became a Crown Colony in its own right in 1937, was subordinate to the Viceroy in all matters. The most important Residents for the period of this paper were James Stewart (1916, 1919), Thomas Scott (1921), John Stewart (1925), George Stewart Symes (1928), and Bernard Reilly (1931). However, for the duration of World War One, the Aden Resident reported not only to the India Office and the Government of India, but also to the War Office. Confusingly, in 1917 control of the Aden Protectorate (but not Aden itself) was transferred from the Government of India to the

[80] A religiously observant Jew, Isaacs attained the highest rank of Peerage in British history to date. This growing presence of Jewish influence will be a significant factor when allegations of Jewish persecution in Yemen erupt after the war.

Foreign Office.[81] This would change when the Protectorate came under the jurisdiction of the Colonial Office (1932) and finally when Aden itself had to report to the Colonial Office (1937) upon becoming a Crown Colony. Thus, just within the parameters of the administration of India, were three geographical centers of decision-making (London, New Delhi, and Aden) and five different organizational offices (Government of India, India Office, Foreign Office, Colonial Office, and War Office.)[82]

According to an Eastern Report from April of 1917, "The Government of India has always clung to the hope that the Imam Yahya would come out on top and on our side, although he has consistently played the Turkish game for three years."[83] Illustrative of the problem of "too many fingers in the pie," there followed a comment that "the sooner we can get another Hashimite [sic] leader to replace Yahya in the Imamate the better for us and the better for the Arab Movement."[84] It is unclear if the person being quoted was ignorant of the fact that the Imamate was a Shia institution, and thus not part of the Hashemite (Sunni) tradition, or if he simply did not care. In either case, the support that the Government of India offered to the Imam served as an irritant to competing bases of power.

In addition to Delhi, Cairo was another locus of power, where the Foreign Office rather than the India Office was dominant. Situated in close proximity to the Suez Canal, and tasked with oversight of the Anglo-Egyptian Condominium in the Sudan, Cairo had a vested interest in

[81] As mentioned in chapter one, the Eastern and Western Protectorates were comprised originally of nine tribes to the east of Aden who agreed to sign protection treaties with Aden in exchange for hefty financial stipends. As time went on, more tribes sought this type of "protection", much to the annoyance of the Zaydi Imam.

[82] http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/a2a/records.aspx?cat=059-r20_2&cid=1#1 accessed on 25 July 2013.

[83] CAB/24/144, Eastern Report XXX, dated April 24, 1917, p. 38.

[84] Ibid.

maintaining stability in the Red Sea. The creation of the Condominium was rooted in British fears of the dislocation which took place as a result of the arousal of messianic Islamist sentiment under the Mahdi and the subsequent death of General Charles "Chinese" Gordon at the Battle of Khartoum in 1885. Established in 1899, the Condominium was led by the Governor-General of the Sudan, who was a British army officer, answerable to the Foreign Office via its auxiliary branch in Cairo. The first two Governors-General of the Sudan, Herbert Kitchener and Reginald Wingate, would extend a policy of 'divide and rule.' Wingate stated that "a backward country is liable to paroxysms of fanatical agitation when the ruling authority is not of the same creed as the bulk of the inhabitants."[85] The strategy in the Sudan had been to foster a "safe" form of Islam, so as not to allow radicalized Islam a foothold. Thus, orthodox (Sunni) ulema from Al Azhar in Cairo were brought in to train the less educated (and thus, at risk) populations. The lessons learned by these two leaders in the Sudan would have a tremendous influence in framing policies across the Red Sea in Yemen, and may explain why the Foreign Office based in Cairo backed the Idris as the next leader of Yemen. After the violence of the Mahdist rebellion in 1885, and the death of the alleged Mahdi, the British officers of the Sudan actually supported his son and religious heir, keeping him close in the hopes of channeling aberrant and potentially violent beliefs into a more Western-friendly direction.[86] One Al-Azhar scholar who was brought in to train the ulema was none other than Muhammad Abduh, who had impressed Wingate with his

[85] *Reports on the Finance, Administration and Condition of the Sudan*, 1905. Cited in Voll, *Britain and the Ulama*, 212.

[86] The Foreign Office must have thought that the potentially radically Sufi leader of Asir could be molded in the same fashion.

non-threatening, "reform" view of Islam.[87] The memory of the murder of General Charles "Chinese" Gordon in Khartoum in 1885 at the hand of the Mahdi was still very much alive among the members of the Foreign Office, many of whom had started their careers in Africa, and the prospect of another Mahdist-like rising was of concern.[88] To exacerbate this fear, there were direct ties between Yemen and Sudan in the person of the scholar Abdel Rahman Ibn Hussein al-Jabri. Al-Jabri was invited to be a house guest of the Mahdi's son, Sayyid 'Abd al-Rahman al-Mahdi, during which time he wrote a history of the Mahdist movement.[89] It is likely the Foreign Office saw an opportunity to monitor the activities and direct the influence of a potential enemy, while at the same time providing a balance against the Imam and his strong hold in the mountains surrounding Sanaa.

The Sufi background of the Idris of Asir and the independence of the Shia Imam Yahya meant that both of these Yemeni leaders held the potential to become radicalized. The British relied upon their experiences elsewhere in the Red Sea to inform policy there. So it was that Wingate came to one of two conclusions: either he believed the Idris' religious practice was closest to orthodox Islam, and thus "safe" from radicalization, and therefore should be the appropriate partner for the British, or he believed the Idris was at such risk for radicalization that the Foreign Office needed to keep him close to maintain control over him.

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[87] Muhammad Abduh was one of the leading Islamic modernists of the late 19th -early 20th century, along with his follower, Muhammad Rashid Rida. See Gabriel Warburg, *Islam, Sectarianism and Politics in Sudan Since the Mahdiyya* (The University of Wisconsin Press, 2003), 37.

[88] For more information about how the memory of General Gordon's violent death at the hands of Islamic extremists was used to propagate the Conservative Party's foreign policy in the Red Sea decades after his death, see Stephanie D. Laffer, "Gordon's Ghosts: British Major-General Charles George Gordon and His Legacies, 1885-1960" (2010). *Electronic Theses, Treatises and Dissertations.* Paper 3319.

[89] Gabriel Warburg, *Islam, Sectarianism and Politics in Sudan Since the Mahdiyya* (Madison, The University of Wisconsin Press, 2003), 37.

Another factor which enhanced Cairo's decision-making leverage was the placement there during the war years of the newly-created Arab Bureau. The Bureau appeared during a time when bureaucrats in the India Office were strained to also oversee the machinations of the Ottomans in the Middle East. By 1916, Sir Mark Sykes attempted to stream-line information to improve the decision-making process by suggesting the creation of an Arab Bureau to better field intelligence and counter German and Ottoman anti-British propaganda "among non-Indian Moslems."[90] A secret memorandum from February bemoaned the fact that "One natural political sphere [Arabian Peninsula] is arbitrarily divided into two parts, each of which is, for no apparent logical reason, in the hands of a separate Government [India and Egypt]."[91] Technically part of the Foreign Office, the intelligence agents stationed there became a power unto themselves. Figures such as T. E. Lawrence, Gilbert Clayton and David Hogarth became extremely influential in Arabian politics via their vantage point from Cairo, even after the Bureau closed at the end of the War. Indeed, it was Clayton, the Director of Military Intelligence in Egypt during the War, who undertook an unsuccessful journey to visit the Imam Yahya over Christmas, 1926, to try to get him to sign a territorial treaty.

Beyond Delhi and Cairo, London was the center of a third power base in the form of, the Colonial Office, and it is this office which attempted to consolidate Middle East policy making when Winston Churchill, the former First Lord of the Admiralty, became the new Colonial Secretary, an office which he held from February of 1921-October of 1922. The Colonial Office did not possess oversight for all British overseas possessions and was secondary to the India Office and Foreign Office with regard to Yemen, with the exception of the Protectorates. The

[90] Memorandum by Sykes, 23 December 1915, British Foreign Office 882/2 ARB/15/4, 1-14.

[91] CAB 24/143, Secret Memorandum, February 1917, p. 4.

Colonial office also held an inferior reputation compared to these other government entities. Because Yemen was never directly colonized by Great Britain but was seen as a foreign power, Winston Churchill and his department would have to play a secondary advising role.

The Admiralty and the Air Ministry had different missions, and disagreements between these two entities contributed to the interdepartmental discord. Operating under the auspices of the War Office, both would be tapped to support British efforts at governmentality in Yemen. With the Foreign Office backing the Idris of Asir (with weapons supplied through an authorized syndicate), and the Italians supplying the Imam with munitions, there appeared to be a proxy war between Great Britain and Italy playing out in Yemen.[92] The rise of fascism in Italy in 1922 and the continued Italian quest for empire in East Africa and Red Sea islands meant that both agencies would be competing for government funding for Red Sea surveillance. Adding to their job was the need to monitor the slave traffic emanating from Ethiopia, the Sudan, and Somali land. The two sloops that the Red Sea Patrol had available to patrol the Red Sea were woefully inadequate to nab the slave traffic, in part because they were not designed to navigate the shallow littoral of Yemen's shoreline, where the slave dhows would often seek refuge under cover of night. Additionally, officials complained about the growing instability of the Red Sea due to the strength of the Egyptian nationalist Wafd party and the increasing independence of the Zaydi Imam Yahya, while the unhappiness of Ibn Saud was growing, surrounded by enemies, including Yahya on his southern border. Because Yemen was not a colony, mandate, or protectorate, it was not possible to station troops within its borders, so the burden shifted to Aden and Cairo. "Any change of Ibn Saud's friendly attitude to us would have deplorable

[92] CAB 24/182, Extract from Draft Minutes of the 218th Meeting of the Committee of Imperial Defense, November 25, 1926, p. 2.

repercussions on the Red Sea littoral.[93] The concerns over Yahya and the need to stop the Red Sea slave trade led to the Air Ministry eventually becoming involved. It was intended as a cost-saving measure, although this financial advantage may not have been realized. In correspondence between Khartoum and Cairo in 1928, concerns were expressed over the expense of air support. "We have given the Air Force every opportunity to show what they can do, but. . .we find them a rather costly adjunct. It is too early to see how effective they are."[94] A letter from the Governor of the Upper Nile Province (Sudan) reiterated this sentiment:

> Trying out the R.A.F. is not without its jests. Most things turn out different to what one expects. I was very nervous the R.A.F. was going to carry out a policy of "Hatred" and brutality. So far, however, they don't seem to have killed anything except cattle. They take a wonderful lot of looking after. . . As far as I can see to date, the R.A.F. requires as much in the way of ground troops as would do the job anyway-so why waste the money on the flying?[95]

2.6 Tribal Confederations

Much has been said about the tribal nature of the Arabian Peninsula. Indeed most recent scholars seem to be reductionist in their attempts to classify political groups by their tribal allegiance. While this is a significant component of the identity of the inhabitants of the Peninsula, examining the tribe to the exclusion of other information serves to not only diminish the importance of the variety and range of allegiances in Yemen, but also obscures genuine expressions of independence and agency expressed through religion during several crucial decades of Yemen's history. Nonetheless, a basic understanding of the tribal makeup of Yemen is in order.

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[93] FO 800/262. Private letter from the High Commissioner for Egypt and the Sudan to the Cairo Residency, dated January 15, 1928.

[94] Ibid.

[95] FO 800/262, Private letter (no date) from the Governor of the Upper Nile Province (Sudan).

There are a variety of ways to organize the tribal allegiance system in Southwest Asia during and after World War I. Geographically-speaking, the mountain tribes of the north, centered around Saada and Sanaa held certain characteristics in common in terms of their political economy. They tended to be affiliated with those of the Zaydi Shia persuasion, supportive of the Zaydi Imam, Ibn Yahya. Yet, one cannot make such assumptions automatically. The Imam engendered much hatred among the mountain tribes when he made a peace deal with the Ottomans, the Treaty of Da'an, in 1911. Many Zaydis who belonged to these tribes located in the mountains found their villages destroyed and their tribal Shaykhs taken prisoner by the Ottomans. The fact that the Zaydi Imam had agreed to a peace deal with the Turks (rather than show a willingness to take up the sword against them) undermined a basic tenet of Zaydi teaching, and thus cost the Imam some tribal support.[96]

The Red Sea tribes of the Tihama constitute another power base. In this location, the Idris of Asir-a leader with an enviable Sufi pedigree (but with ethnic ties closer to Africa than Arabia) attracted a number of the merchant class who operated out of the Asiri ports. Additionally, the Idris attracted followers from a variety of disenchanted Zaydi tribes because of his early opposition to the Ottomans during the war.[97]

Finally, there are the tribes of the Hadramaut. Many of these tribes lived in Aden's Eastern Protectorate, and their tribal shaykhs were on the payroll of the Government of India. The records of the Aden Resident indicate that when these shaykhs visited Aden periodically to pick up their stipends, they were housed in grand style and feted by the India Office officials

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[96] See chart in Appendix A. This is compiled from *A Handbook of Arabia*, vol. I. Compiled by the Geographical Section of the Naval Intelligence Division, Admiralty, 1920. According to the field survey undertaken for the Admiralty, at least thirteen of the seventy-four listed tribes had previously supported the Imam and were persuaded to oppose him upon his agreement with the Turks per the Treaty of Da'an in 1911. Some of the larger tribes mentioned were the Hamdan esh-Sham, the Beni Juma'ah,and the Ahl Razah.

[97] Ibid.

there, as if they were nabobs from Bombay. This requirement to come to Aden to receive their stipends was another way for the panopticon to monitor what was going on in distant parts without having to take up arms or employ acts of negative coercion.

CHAPTER THREE

RELIGION AS VEHICLE OF AGENCY

3.1 The "Islams" of the Yemen

> I feel sure that if it was a choice between the Turks and ourselves as overlords, the Arab Kings to a man would elect the Turks. It is a reversion to type, or, rather, the call of Islam.[98]

The decision to use the term "Islams" rather than the singular "Islam" in the context of Yemen is deliberate, and reflects the understanding that Islam-like other world creeds-is not monolithic, with both time and geography having led to shifts in its practice and teachings.[99] The military officials and Indian civil servants who staffed the panopticon at Aden brought their understanding of Sunni practices from the Indian subcontinent, where the version of Islam passed down from the Mughal period was very different. They recalled the Indian Revolt of 1857 and feared that the unification of the various confessional groups in Yemen could result in the demise of Aden. Yet, they found themselves unprepared for the particular and unusual religious milieu they found in southwest Arabia, where Sunnis, Zaydi Shias, Ismailis and African Sufis lived side by side, reflecting the centuries of cross-cultural diffusion resulting from the monsoon-powered trade networks. There were also vestiges of ancient animistic practices from the time of the *Jahaliya*.[100] An early twentieth-century traveler recorded that "there is a good deal of nature

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[98] Harold F. Jacob, *Kings of Arabia: The Rise and Set of the Turkish Sovranty in the Arabian Peninsula* (London, Mills & Boon, 1923), 231.

[99] Abdul Hamid el-Zein "Beyond Ideology and Theology: The Search for the Anthropology of Islam," *Annual Review of Anthropology* 6 (1977): 227-254.

[100] The time in Arabia before the rise of Islam, meaning "time of ignorance." الجهل

worship and a widespread belief in omens, charms which are embedded in the flesh of the arm, ghouls, jinns, and heavenly portents. . .[and] shrines. . .credited with supernatural powers."[101]

While Ismaili populations were to be found in India and diasporic Jewish communities were found virtually everywhere, Yemen is unique in the contemporary Islamic world for its sizeable population of Zaydi Shias.[102] Sometimes referred to as "Fiver" Shias, the Zaydis, who lived in the highlands of southwest Arabia, recognized Imamic leadership down to Zaid, the fifth in the line of Imams traced back to Ali, the cousin and son-in-law of the Prophet. These Zaydis differ from other Shia groups which can be found in Iran, Lebanon, Bahrain, as well as around the Gulf, in that they have not been quietist in their historical practice. Rather, Zaydi Shias have a revolutionary fervor at the root of their belief system which promotes the "bringer of the sword" to power to right the wrongs of past administrations.[103]

There is evidence that the British were generally cognizant of the primary characteristics which distinguished the Zaydis from the Sunnis of the lowlands. and that this understanding was more than superficial. Regular memos from Aden report on the activities of Imam Ibn Yahya, and his repeated requests for support from the British. One report that was authored by Lieutenant G. Wyman Bury and sent in 1917 laid out the British understanding of the requirements for the Zaydi Imamate. The list includes the following. . .

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[101] Rosita Forbes, "A Visit to the Idrisi Territory in Asir and Yemen," *The Geographical Journal* 62 (1923): 276-278.

[102] While the Zaydis are most closely associated with Yemen at the present time, especially with regard to the ongoing Houthi rebellion taking place in northern Yemen, historically-speaking there have been pockets of Zaydis in north Africa, Iran, Iraq, and even China. See Donald D. Leslie "The Integration of Religious Minorities in China: The Case of Chinese Muslims," The Fifty-ninth George Ernest Morrison Lecture in Ethnology, 1998, accessed February 2, 2014, http://chinainstitute.anu.edu.au/morrison/morrison59.pdf.

[103] Brinkley Messick, *The Calligraphic State: Textual Domination and History in a Muslim Society* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), 482 (Kindle e-book edition)

(1) "An Imam must be of Fatimite descent. . .Theoretically he is designated by his predecessor. . .at the instance of the Imam's Council, which is first convened by the Imam at his accession, and may muster up to 200 members of the Ashraf and Sadah. It invites the Imam to appoint his successor before his demise, but, in actual practice, his choice is much swayed by this council."

(2) "An Imam may not be a minor and he must also have attained distinction among *ulema* and theologians."

(3) "The Imam may reside where he likes. . .but prestige attaches to residence at Sanaa."

(4) "There are two collateral houses, Sharaf ed-Din and Hamed ed-Din, between which the Imamate has oscillated for generations, thus fogging genealogies and continuity of succession."[104]

The Zaydis were often in conflict with the people of the lowland Tihama region nearer to the coast, who followed the Sunni school of the Sha'afi persuasion. Among the Sunni population along the Red Sea was a strong mystical influence, especially identifiable in the population of Asir, who followed the Idris, the great-grandson of Ahmad Ibn Idris, a famous and well-respected nineteenth century North African Sufi. Sufism is an amalgam of Islam with a variety of religious traditions, and exists anywhere Islamic merchants traveled. The Red Sea and the Indian Ocean trade offered a number of opportunities over the centuries for Arabs to encounter other confessional traditions, and Sufi teachings reflect the syncretism which evolved from this historical exposure. This gave rise to the simultaneous vilification and admiration of Sufi groups.

Sufi teachings are based on specific *tariqas* which have more to do with individual leaders' esoteric beliefs than the literal words of the Qur'an or Hadith. The devotion with which the Sufi faithful follow their leaders (shaykhs) at times competes with their devotion to the

[104] *The Arab Bulletin*, vol. II, "Remarks on the Imamate," (1917): 324-325.

Qur'an itself.[105] With so much significance focused on a single individual whose followers are unquestioningly obedient, room exists for radicalism to occur. On the other hand, this same unquestioning devotion to a person has placed Sufis periodically at odds with more extreme elements, which focus on a more direct path via a strict interpretation of the Qur'an alone. Such fundamentalist devotion can itself become radicalized. At other times, Sufis are seen as a bulwark against radicalism, in that their natural enemy seems to be puritanical fundamentalists within Islam.[106]

As important as tribal ties were, claims to religious importance through inherited titles were at least of equal stature. Confessional heritage played as significant a role as tribal identification in determining divisions in Yemeni society, and the leaders of communities distinguished their importance within society by using their families' religious legacy as a springboard to power. It was not unheard of for tribesmen to cross tribal lines to pursue their own religious authority. In the Zaydi tradition, learned families of *sayyids* lived within protected tribal enclaves, and this mission of religious protection shifted the focus from an intra-tribal responsibility to an inter-tribal one.[107] According to Paul Dresch, "This tradition made tribal concerns subordinate to learned [religious and scholarly] interests."[108] Sometimes the association of a particular Sufi shaykhs was sought out by a tribe, because the shaykhs were believed to

[105] The leader of a Sufi *tariqa* can go by a variety of titles, depending on the geographical location. While most were commonly referred to as a "shaykh", other titles include "marabout" and "murshid."

[106] Sameer Arshad, "Is Sufism a Bulwark Against Radicalism?" *Times of India*, (Delhi, India),March 22, 2009.

[107] The title of *sayyid* was claimed by those who were descended from the Prophet. Within the Zaydi tradition, special significance was attached to those descended through the Alid line, in keeping with Shia tradition. Their protected status within a tribe is referred to as *hijrah*. See Paul Dresch, *Tribes, Government, and History in Yemen* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993), 158.

[108] Dresch, *Tribes,* 140.

transmit *baraka*, a process which was believed by the faithful to continue to take place even after the shaykh's death, accounting for the tradition of enshrinement of Sufi tombs.[109]

3.2 The Impact of Religious Reform Movements

By the early twentieth century, the reform of Islamic practice, of which the most recent campaign had started in the eighteenth century, was well underway, in part reflecting the response to the changing political, economic, and social landscape brought about by industrialization and the imperialism of Western European nations. In the Middle East, some blamed their diminished stature on corrupt Ottoman leadership and the accretions adopted over time by the orthodox *ulema*.[110] They pointed to the erosion of traditional authority, displayed by the retreat of sharia courts, shifting class structure and the loss of independent administration of education and the *waqf.*[111] Movements of renewal (*tajdid*) differed considerably across geographic regions, but shared several common features. They often appealed to lay persons and demanded flexibility (*ijtihad*) in the interpretation of Islamic sources (Qur'an and Hadith). They tended to cite *jihad* as their rationale for opposing those rulers whom they believed did not practice true Islam.[112] Additionally, those societies on the periphery of the Middle East

[109] The term *baraka* refers to a sort of blessing and power that the faithful believed could be transmitted from their shaykh to his followers, even after his death. This accounts for the pilgrimages to the tombs of many Sufi leaders. In the Internet age, some Sufi groups believe that physical proximity is not necessary to receive *baraka*.

[110] The term "orthodox" is not a completely satisfactory word for this context. Yet, it conveys the meaning of the traditional Sunni leadership (*ulema*) and its practices and habits, which (according to those wanting renewal) had been significantly expanded and perverted over time. It was these accretions which the movements of renewal tried to undo.

[111] Nikki Keddie, "The Revolt of Islam, 1700-1993: Comparative Considerations and Relations to Imperialism," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 36, no. 3 (1994): 467. The *waqf* (pl. *owqaf*) was one way families could fulfill their religious obligation of charity, by endowing a school, mosque, or other socially beneficial religious project.

[112] *Jihad* means "struggle", but has often been translated as "holy war."

frequently adopted renewal strategies built upon a mystical (Sufi) orientation.[113] By expropriating the power of the *ulema* to the public sphere, these *tajdid* movements operated outside the parameters of orthodoxy, by claiming that the "orthodox" had departed from the true fold. They wanted to return to the austere and pure life of their pious ancestors. This challenged the imperial power of the Ottomans, in that the Sultanate and the Caliphate were essentially one and the same office. If their religious authority was being questioned, then their political authority would also be in jeopardy. The British Empire was also challenged because it had controlled its Muslim populations by centrally manipulating the *ulema* by placing them directly under their purview. If the *ulema* lost its power to independent-thinking popular masses, the British would lose a significant avenue of control.

Scholar John Voll identifies two types of *tajdid* movements, both of which hold relevancy for Yemen in the interwar period. The first type is associated with the Wahhabi movement, which Voll describes as "message-oriented."[114] Although Wahhabism is associated with its founder, Muhammad ibn Abdul al-Wahhab (d. 1792), his denouncement of impurities and innovations within Islam is understood to be fundamentalist in nature, meaning that he believed he was merely reiterating the universal and original teachings of God, without adding anything new to the message. Because of al-Wahhab's partnership with the Saud family, this version of Islam became the dominant form spread by the Ikhwan in northern Arabia, and is credited with inspiring other *salafi*-type movements, including AQAP today. However, it was the second type of *tajdid* movement which held the most relevance for Yemen. This "leader-oriented" version is identified with the Mahdism of the Sudan, as well as Shia and Sufi groups.

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[113] Nehemiah Leftzion, "Resurgent Islamic Fundamentalism as an Integrative Factor in the Politics of Africa and the Middle East," *Canadian Journal of African Studies* 42, no. 2/3 (2008): 548.

[114] John Voll, "Wahhabism and Mahdism: Alternative Styles of Islamic Renewals," *Arab Studies Quarterly* 4, no. ½ (1982): 115.

For instance, Zaydi leadership in Yemen was tied to the person of the Imam, and his individual ability to successfully overthrow those who oppress the righteous. Likewise, Muhammad Ahmad, the figure behind the Mahdist uprisings of the late nineteenth century trained within the Sammaniyyah order, a NeoSufi group.[115] According to Voll, this made him "more inclined to adopt the more person-oriented idiom of the Sufi tradition."[116] These "leader-oriented" groups also tended to expand their influence beyond the borders of their countries of origin. This at least in part explains how a descendant of a Sufi teacher from Africa could leverage his ancestor's religious reputation against a landscape heavily influenced by Wahhabi teaching.

3.3 The Idris of Asir

Muhammad ibn Ali al-Idris (d. 1924) and his successors ruled over the short-lived state of Asir between 1906-1934, when the territory was absorbed by Ibn Saud. Asir (now part of Saudi Arabia) was quite small, ranging from 80 miles in length along the Arabian littoral inwards to the Tihama plain up to 40 miles. Wedged as it was just south of the Hejaz and southwest of Nejd, and including the two small ports of Jizan and Midi, its role in Arabian politics would be more significant than its relative size would suggested.

The Idris (the title given to Muhammad ibn Ali al-Idris) was a remarkable man on a variety of levels. He was the leader to whom the Colonial and Foreign Offices staked their future in the Yemen in the early days following the end of the war. A Sunni, he was influenced by Sufi and Wahhabi teachings, yet his personal charisma and stance against the Turks attracted some Zaydi followers as well. He and his family were able to supplant the local leading family in the

[115] Ibid. John Voll defines neo-Sufism as "as set of movements of Islamic renewal in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries."

[116] Voll, "Wahhabism and Mahdism,"120.

tribal-conscious world of Arabia-this, despite the fact that he was not from Asir, and even the suggestion of ancestral Arabian roots is not well-supported. There is somewhat of a conflict in official records as to his ethnic origin, but they suggest at least partial African origins. In 1922, the American consul in Aden recorded that the mother of the Idris was a Sudanese woman and his father a "Moroccan religious adventurer of a fairly well-known family of Arabian origin."[117] A British Cabinet memo from 1926 refers to the Idrisi's great-grandfather as "a Sudanese, who had settled on the Arabian Coast in 1829. He acquired much land and a reputation for sanctity."[118] The Arab-American writer, Ameen Rihani, toured the Arabian Peninsula and recorded his thoughts and impressions upon being ushered into the presence of the Idris:

> I was in the presence. . .of a black pontiff and prince, a negro sovereign who ruled a million Arabs, among them many thousand descendants of the Prophet. . .[He] was a man of huge proportions and a strangely composite physiognomy. The only negroid features, besides his colour, were his lips and perhaps his nose. . .His broad forehead and his graceful hands might have been either Arian [sic] or Semitic. . .But he spoke Arabic perfectly, with eloquence and animation, and without an accent.[119]

If Rihani was mesmerized with the Idris, it is clear that the other 'Arabian Kings' decidedly were not. The Hijazi Sherif Hussein called him a "mean fellow" and an "interloper."[120] Hussein clearly did not acknowledge the Idris' Sufi pedigree, referring to him as "a man who was not recognized by anyone to be anything at all, for he had made himself Sheikh, and had

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[117] Sinclair, Vol. I, 33.

[118]CAB/24/182. Memorandum from the Colonial Office, Oct. 18, 1926, attached as an enclosure to a meeting of the Committee of Imperial Defence Chiefs of Staff (Secret).

[119] Ameen Rihani, *Around the Coasts of Arabia* . 185. Rihani, a Maronite Christian of Lebanese descent, focused on the two features that seem to be most controversial: That the Idris was apparently from Africa (not Arabia) and maintained his base of power through religious (not tribal) authority.

[120]Jacob, *Kings of Arabia,* 228.

landed in some place which was not ruled by anyone."[121] The Idris had other enemies who cast aspersions on his character by accusing him of resorting to trickery and magic to establish his reputation among the local population. One witness stated that "an electric battery was his special badge of office. Shocks were administered to his credulous tribesmen and this as a means to enhance his occult reputation!"[122] Another account refers to his ability to shape-shift and other remarkable feats. "I might mention his faked miracle of turning water into blood by means of anihiline [sic] dye or his startling changes of make-up (probably procured in Egypt) which enable him to appear before his astonished followers as an old man, a youth, a negro, or even . . .a woman."[123] It is possible that at least some of these stories are merely propaganda from the Turks who feared his popularity among Arab tribesmen who during the war opposed Turkish rule in Yemen. Some of these stories were also circulated out of the Aden Resident's office, which had a vested interest in doing so, since Indian officials supported the Idris' enemy, the Zaydi Imam Yahya.

The question arises as to why the Foreign Office would choose to place the weight of the British Empire in Yemen behind a figure who had no tribal ties to the region, was of questionable Arab lineage, and practiced a form of Islam which many orthodox Muslims viewed as superstitious-or worse. The answer has several layers, and cannot be dismissed as merely an example of the trope of "divide and conquer." Impressively, by every account the Idris had the most years of formal education of the four contending leaders on the Arabian Peninsula (Hussein, Ibn Saud, Imam Yahya), having studied at Cairo's Al-Azhar University for six

[121] Ibid.

[122] Ibid., 125.

[123] George Wyman Bury, *Arabia Infelix, or the Turks in Yamen* (London, Macmillan, 1915), 22.

years.[124] Al-Azhar was and is the preeminent Sunni school of theology in the world, and an education received there would most certainly have impressed Sunni Muslims everywhere.[125] The high value that British officials placed on the tame and orthodox reputation of Al-Azhar can be seen by the utilization of Azharite scholars in the Anglo-Egyptian Sudan, where until at least 1918, all provincial qadis were al-Azhar-trained.[126] But not all were convinced of its orthodoxy. In a 1920 monthly review of Revolutionary Movements, Cabinet officials challenged the "tame" reputation of the school. "Al-Azhar must now be counted among the Extremist[s]. . .[where]. . .students hold secret political meetings in the Mosque and are prominent in the disturbances outside."[127]

Not only did the Idris hold the academic credentials that satisfied the British, he also was heir to a remarkable religious legacy, which garnered their concern, if not their respect. His status as a political leader in Asir was rooted in his religious heritage from his great-grandfather, Ahmad Ibn Idris, a famous Sufi thinker and scholar from Fez whose students developed their own *tariqas* and disseminated their teachings around the globe in the nineteenth century.[128] The ascendancy of Idrisi power in Yemeni society, superseding at times even tribal authority, cannot be fully understood without recognition of this family legacy. As this dissertation will assert, it was this religious heritage from which Muhammad ibn Ali al-Idris derived the power and the

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[124]Knut S. Vikør, "Jihad, 'ilm, and tasawwuf: Two Justifications of Action from the Idrisi Tradition," *Studia Islamica* no. 90 (2000), p.159. I cannot find any primary source confirmation of this, but it is referenced without documentation in two secondary sources. It is not clear if the Idris claimed to hold the coveted الإجازَة

[125] Ironically, Al-Azhar was founded as a Shia institution during the Fatamid period, although it is considered a bastion of Sunni theology at the present time.

[126] Gabriel Warburg, *Islam, Sectarianism and Politics in Sudan Since the Mahdiyya* (Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 2003), 66.

[127] CAB 24/98 "A Monthly Review of Revolutionary Movements in Foreign Countries", Report no. 16, p. 31, February 1920.

[128] The word *tariqa* best translates as "path." Various Sufi leaders would develop a following, based on their charisma and teachings. This would be passed down from one generation of followers to another.

agency to spurn his Ottoman overlords in Asir and reach out as an ally to the British early in the First World War. The fact that this action was widely supported by his followers (with a few significant exceptions) seems to suggest that historiographies prioritizing tribal bonds over confessional differences may be exaggerated and inaccurate.[129]

The legacy of the Idris' famous great-grandfather, Ahmad ibn Idris (d. 1837) is worth further review. The preeminent scholar on Sufism in Africa refers to him as "undoubtedly one of the key religious figures of the early 19th century Arab Muslim world**."**[130] This is not because of any extensive writings or the establishment of his own *tariqa*-neither of which he accomplished. Yet, he was the teacher of two profoundly influential Sufi leaders: Muhammad Uthman al-Mirghani, the founder of the Sudanese Khatmiya, and Muhammad Ibn Ali al-Sanussi, the founder of the Sanusiyya in Cyrenaica (Libya). As a nineteenth century Neo-Sufi, he was at the forefront of dramatic change that was taking place in Islam and across the Ottoman Empire. While some theorize that the reform movements which appeared in Islam during this period were a reaction to *Dar al-Islam's* contact with the industrialized West, others have argued against this notion, contending that Islamic reform during this period was genuinely an act of original Islamic agency.[131] In any event, while he rejected the more typical Sufi practices such as saint-worship, he embraced the notion of *ijtihad*.[132]

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[129] See Paul Dresch's *Tribes, Government, and History in Yemen* and Shelaigh Weir's *A Tribal Order: Politics and Law in the Mountains of Yemen.*

[130] Rex S. O'Fahey and Ali Salih Karrar,."The Enigmatic Imam: The Influence of Ahmad Ibn Idris."*International Journal of Middle East Studies*, 19 no. 2 (1987), 205.

[131] Anne K. Bang. *The Idrisi State in Asir, 1906-1934 : Politics, Religion and Personal Prestige as Statebuilding Factors in Early twentieth-century Arabia* (London: Hurst & Company, 1996). 39. It is also during this period when other Islamic reform movements appear, such as Shah Wali Allah al-Dihlawi (India) and Muhammad ibn Abd al-Wahhab (Arabia).

[132] Fahey and Karrar, *Enigmatic Saint*, 207.

Muhammad al-Idris was not a religious leader, but he demonstrated political power by drawing upon his religious heritage. The best scholarly insight into his attitudes can be extrapolated from his writings, the longest and most detailed of which is entitled *Baydn li'l-nas wa-hudd wa- maw'iza li'l-muttaqin*, a thirty-page rationale for taking up arms against the Ottoman Empire.[133] Published in 1912 in Cairo before the start of World War One, it outlines the reasons for the Idris' opposition to Ottoman authority. His words provides an excellent contrast to the Zaydi Imam Yaha, who through an act of pragmatism had partnered with the Ottoman Empire via the Treaty of Da'an in 1911, an act which many tribesmen saw as a betrayal, and motivated at least some tribes to shift their support from Yahya to the Idris. To summarize the Idris' position, he did not oppose the Ottoman right to rule, but the un-Islamic manner in which it carried out its authority. He primarily focused on the corruption of the regime, and the rejection of *Sharia* law in favor of the more secular *nizami*.

> [The] state has filled the important offices, and allowed them, in their extravagance, arrogance and pride, to create havoc in the land without fear or shame. We see them making the forbidden lawful and abusing honor, openly sinning and deviating from the laws that God and his Messenger sent, without care and without manners. Prayer is not called for, nor is fasting observed, nor are they just in their judgments. Neither do they restrain their junior members. . .from interfering with the livelihood of the citizens, to say nothing about their indulgence in bribery and manipulation of public money.[134]

He emphasized the common features of belief he shared with Sunni Muslims in Yemen, and even used the title "Imam", a religious title with political overtones, and the same title used by his Zaydi rival, Yahya. He also took credit for elements of modernization which had taken place.

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[133] The literal translation of the title is "An announcement to the people and a guide and council for the pious." See Bang's *The Idrisi State in Asir, 1906-1934*, 143-188, which contains the entire Arabic text of this document, along with her translation.

[134] Bang, *The Idris State in Asir*, 173. Eventually, the Ottoman regime granted the Imam's right to implement Sharia law in Zaydi territory within Yemen as a result of the Treaty of Da'an, but this did not apply to the non-Zaydi western Tihama coast where the Idris ruled.

"Thus, I helped. . .to extend the telegraph, a task which the Government had not been able to perform since it established itself in the Yemen, due to the sums that had disappeared without trace."[135]

Some of the ideas which made Ahmad Ibn Idris famous and upon which Muhammad al-Idrisi's political power was based should have caused some amount of concern among the British, who had had ample exposure to the independent nature of Sufi practice in the recent past in Africa. Not too many decades earlier, the war hero General Charles "Chinese" Gordon had lost his life in 1885 in a confrontation with a Sufi-inspired Mahdist leader in the siege of Khartoum, Sudan. As a result, later leaders of the Anglo-Egyptian Condominium actively promoted a safer, more predictable, orthodox version of Islam in the Sudan, to the extent that they imported *ulema* from Al Azhar, the foremost theological school in Egypt, to train their clergymen.[136] The notion of *ijtihad* should have sparked dire warning for those who served in the Sudan, as it opened up the Qur'an to new and possibly de-stabilizing interpretations of Islamic scripture.

With an important religious heritage and a reputation for opposing corruption, why were the Idris and his family not able to win out over his rival, Yahya? One reason could be that once the Ottoman Empire was defeated and dismembered at the end of World War One, there was no longer a common goal that united many of the tribes behind the Asir leadership. Another explanation could be that the Idris had partnered with the Italians and then the British during the war, both of which were suspected of wanting to impose their own imperial stamp on Yemen. While the Idris was popular with the British Foreign Office and Colonial Office, the India Office

[135] Ibid., 177.

[136] Warburg, *Islam in Sudan*, 67.

was more supportive of the Zaydi Imam. Aden Assistant Resident Colonel Harold Jacobs believed that it was "criminal" for the British to award the Idris the strategic and lucrative port town of Hodeidah at the end of the war instead of granting it to the Zaydi Imam, an act which he believed undermined the stated promise of remaining neutral regarding the internal politics of Yemen.[137] It has already been mentioned that he was better educated than the Zaydi Imam, and that he represented himself to be more progressive than other contenders for power in the region. He also promised to grant a lucrative sixty-year lease to a British firm to develop the salt industry in Asir.[138]

Muhammad ibn Ali al-Idris died in 1920, and his son took over leadership of Asir, only to be challenged by his cousin Mustapha, and later, by his uncle Hasan.[139] In 1923, Ibn Saud and the Idris family signed a treaty of cooperation, which stripped Asir of its control over external political and commercial relations. By 1934, Asir was completely absorbed into the new state of Saudi Arabia.

3.4 The Zaydi Imam Yahya

Ahmad bin Yahya Hamidaddan (b. 1891), who had served in the position of Imam since 1904, was the other contender for British partnership in Yemen. Like the Idris of Asir, he could lay claim to a distinguished religious heritage. Unlike the Idris, however, Yahya was native-born, from a family of Sayyids of the al-Qasimi dynasty who had ruled Yemen for nine hundred years. Yahya was named for the son of Zayd, the founder of this particular line of Shia belief, who was murdered at Kufah by the Umayyad forces, his son Yahya later tracked down and killed in

[137] Jacob, *Kings of Arabia*, 241.

[138] Sinclair, vol I, 34.

[139] Bang *The Idrisi State in Asir*, 116-118.

Khorasan.[140] As a Zaydi Shia, Yahya belonged to a minority within a minority in the Arab world. Zaydi Shias dominated the political and religious leadership in the mountains south of Asir and competed for power with the Sunnis in the Tihama region along the coast. Apart from the fact that the Zaydis recognize only the first five Imams, rather than the twelve that are accepted by the Twelver Shias found in Iran and Lebanon, these tribes which followed Zaydi Islam were distinct in that they did not determine their leadership through traditional hereditary lines. Rather, as historian Gabriele Vom Bruck notes, they were ". . .prepared to pay allegiance to any male descendant of Ali or Fatima who claim[ed] leadership by 'rising' ((*khuruj*) against tyrants."[141] Training in Islamic jurisprudence was another expectation.[142]

It is clear that the Zaydis themselves did not see the Imamate as exclusively a religious line of authority, but also a secular political office. Vom Bruck points out that Ibn Yahya referred to the Imamate as a monarchy during the period when he was trying to forge stronger ties with European powers during the decade following World War I.[143] Likewise, Klorman notes that according to Yemen's Zaydi community, ". . .any of Ali's offspring may assume the imamate provided that he proves his military and political supremacy and that he is knowledgeable in religious studies."[144] Beyond that issue, however, a careful reading of the *Arab Bulletin* reveals numerous memos where the Imam was clear that he was trying to assert political control beyond his traditional mountain homeland, and into non-Zaydi regions along the coastal

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[140] Carole Hillenbrand, translator, *The History of al-Tabari, the Waning of the Umayyad Caliphate*, vol. 26.

[141] Gabriele Vom Bruck, "Disputing Descent-Based Authority in the Idiom of Religion: The Case of the Republic of Yemen." *Die Welt Des Islams* 38, no. 2 (July 1998): 152.

[142] Ibid.

[143] Ibid., 150.

[144] Bat-Zion Eraqi Klorman, "Jewish and Muslim Messianism in Yemen." *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, 22, no. 2 (May 1990): 203.

plain of Yemen, where Sunnis had traditionally ruled. To what degree this personal political ambition existed separate and apart from the Zaydi population's understanding of the Imam's religious role needs further scrutiny. This nuance of understanding is not apparent in the available British government documents from the period. Kuhn's research reaffirms that the Ottomans viewed the Imam as a political opportunist who had the potential to foment an uprising in order to have him named as Caliph, competing with the Sunni Ottoman Caliph in Constantinople. The voice that is inaccessible is the viewpoint of the illiterate Zaydi. It is difficult to determine if this group saw Imam Yahya as a political leader who simultaneously held religious authority or if he was primarily seen as a religious leader who was forced by circumstances to assert political control. Colonial Ottoman and British memorandum suggest that the Zaydi were not unified in their support of the Imam. Some Zaydis actually threw their support behind the Idris for what they saw as a betrayal by the Imam in concluding a peace treaty with the Turks in 1911.

There are a number of explanations for why the Zaydis opposed the control of the Turks, who occupied coastal Yemen once again from 1842 through the end of World War I. Klorman suggests that the unhappiness with the Ottoman implementation of the *nizami* (supplanting the Zaydi Sharia) provides a reason, which-combined with a messianic eschatological view (perhaps inspired by local Jewish populations)-led to agitation in support of a new imam. Examining current Zaydi populations in northern Yemen today allows some insight. With the ongoing struggle between Wahhabis from Saudi Arabia who have migrated across the border, internal problems among the Zaydis have come to light, including the tension between the elites (those who can claim descent from Muhammad via Ali, and thus hold *sayyid* status) and the rest of the population. The lack of egalitarianism among the Zaydis is exhibited in a song popular among

the men in Razih, in the north. It informs current tensions that perhaps also existed at the beginning of the last century:

> Oh sayyids, you tricked us
>
> With your turbans, remedies and charms
>
> Whenever we proposed marriage, you said
>
> 'With a *sharifah*, a sayyid's daughter? It's not allowed."
>
> God only knows whose book you studied.[145]

The last line indicates the importance of holy texts, which is unusual in that it is more typical of Sunni groups, and less important among the Shia, who instead prioritize the words of their Imam. Brinkley Messick states. . ."[In the Zaydi school] there had been no such debate concerning the practice of interpretation. For the Zaidis, the 'gate of ijtihad' had always been unproblematically open, and the aggressive advocacy and pursuit of interpretation became a hallmark of their school."[146] To avoid anachronistic assessments, however, further archival research needs to be conducted in Sana'a from the first quarter of the 20th century with the hope that primary documentation exists which reflects the Zaydi viewpoint from the period. Only in this way will the full scope of the role of Zaydi belief and its influence on policy be known.

In order to appreciate the Imam's talent for manipulation post-1918, a brief history of another empire in the region is in order. The Zaydi Imam Muhammad expelled the Ottoman Turks from Yemen in 1636. The Turks returned in 1842, replacing the occupying forces of the Egyptians under the leadership of Muhammad Ali. Kuhn suggests that in this second occupation of the Yemen, the Turks made the decision to govern it differently than its other provinces,

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[145] Shelagh Weir, "A Clash of Fundamentalisms: Wahhabism in Yemen," *Middle East Report* no. 204 (July-September 1997): 26.

[146] Messick, *Calligraphic State*, 534 (Kindle edition)

"adapt[ing] its practices and institutions to local [Zaydi] conditions."[147] Many Zaydis actively supported their Imam al-Mansur bi'llah Muhammad ibn Yahya (d. 1904) to fight against the Turks because of an excessive tax burden which exacerbated the problems brought on by drought, crop failures, and sporadic famine which were ubiquitous in the late nineteenth century. Revolts followed in 1891-1892 and 1898-1899. After the third Zaydi uprising of 1904-1907, led by the son of the previous Imam, al Mutawakkil Yahya ibn Muhammad, the question for the Turks was " how to integrate the Zaydi Imams into the structures of provincial government while at the same time limiting their authority clearly and unambiguously to the local."[148] Two concerns preoccupied the Turks. The first issue was the seeming claim of the Zaydi Imam to the title of caliph, which--if achieved-- would position him in a political context that extended beyond the highlands of Yemen, perhaps challenging the Sunni caliph in Istanbul. The second concern was that the Ottomans knew Ibn Yahya had been marketing himself to both camps of colonial occupiers, and wanted to make him an ally without giving up their own sovereignty in the important coastal areas. A policy of containment was the solution and the Treaty of Da'an was the package in which it was implemented.

The Da'an Treaty of 1911 ostensibly solved these two issues for the Turks. It essentially established a Zaydi-Ottoman condominium in the highlands of the north (similar to the Anglo-Egyptian condominium in the Sudan) which was home to the Zaydis, naming Ibn Yahya as the leader of the Zaydis. By the Ottomans officially recognizing the local religious authority of Ibn Yahya (and making regular payments to him), it was hoped that his appetite for political power would be quenched. Although his authority did not extend much further than the power to select

[147] Thomas Kuhn, "Shaping and Reshaping Colonial Ottomanism: Contesting Boundaries of Difference and Integration in Ottoman Yemen, 1872-1919," *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East* 27, no. 2 (2007): 317.

[148] Ibid., 318.

Islamic jurists (*Qadi*), many of the Zaydis supported him in this role. Others, fed up with over-taxation and land seizures, took advantage of the new breech-loading technology to continually harass their Turkish overlords, as the final political authority rested with the Ottoman governor general, and not the Imam.[149] Even though Ibn Yahya signed the Da'an Treaty in 1911, he continued to carry on surreptitious negotiations with the British. In a letter dated 5 May 1918 (5 months before the armistice which would signal the end of the Ottoman Empire), Imam Yahya expressed concerns about other contenders for the title of Imam, and chastised the British for supporting the Idris (of Asir) as the future leader of Yemen. Instead, he proposed that the British communicate only with him on behalf of all Yemen and that the British promise not to interfere in Yemen's internal affairs.[150] A note inserted by a British official at the conclusion of the letter remarked that "In the past, independent Imamic Government in Yemen has been about as bad and ineffective as a government can be. . .we hope that the Imam will not be armed by us, till we have every reasonable assurance that the arms will be used against, not by, the Turks!"[151]

By the eve of World War I, the British had learned a difficult lesson with an obscure form of Islam, having lost General Gordon in the Sudan in 1885 to the Mahdist Ansar forces. While the Mahdist rebels were Sufis, not Shias, they nevertheless shared some characteristics with Shias, including the emphasis on the teachings of a living Imam over the teachings of a written text, such as the Qur'an. Knowing that such a leader could raise an army of tribal warriors in the name of religious need by a single speech encouraged the British to look for ways to moderate demands and pit rival groups against each other. Another shared feature between the Zaydis of Yemen and the Mahdists in the Sudan was a preoccupation with eschatology. The

[149] Ibid., 321.

[150] *The Arab Bulletin*, vol. 3, 231.

[151] Ibid.

Zaydis suffered a loss of power in Yemen after a series of weak Imams in the eighteenth century followed by the infiltration of Wahhabi teaching in the nineteenth century. With the encroachment of Aden in the Hinterlands, there was a call for an Imam who would take up the sword and set things right.

Notwithstanding these concerns, various documents in the Arab Bureau collection acknowledge that the person of the Zaydi Imam would be a useful ally for the British to have, and could allow them to have hegemony in a region that was surrounded by Ottoman power. As early as January 1, 1916, the year of the founding of the Bureau, a letter reached Sir Ronald Storrs from Sherif Hussein of Mecca, suggesting that he (the Sherif) would like to obtain the assistance of Sayyid Idris in Asir and the Imam Yahya in Yemen. "H. M. Government recognize[ed] that this project had a good chance of success and would seriously embarrass the Turks."[152] A comment at the end of the report suggested that while Sayyid Idris could be relied upon in Asir, Yemen was experiencing grave economic problems, for which the Imam accepted a subsidy from the Turks. The report concluded with a rhetorical question: For how long would the Turks be able to continue to pay this subsidy?[153] A memo dated exactly six months later speculated that there were unconfirmed reports that the Imam was "becoming anti-Turk" while at the same time (or perhaps because) parts of the Tihama were in rebellion.[154] A secret report just one week later credited Imam Yahya with stating that "if they [the Turks] wanted Aden they had better get forward quickly and take it, but that he had no further use for them as they were ruining his people."[155]

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[152] *The Arab Bulletin*, vol. I (1916), "Arab Revolt in Hejaz," 43.

[153] Ibid.., 44.

[154] Ibid., 131.

[155] Ibid., 166.

These passages from 1916 stand in contrast to other reports that the British inserted into the Bulletin to piece together Imam Yahya's previous relationships with the Idris and the Turks.. In summary, Imam Yahya and the Idris had concluded an agreement as early as May of 1912 to join forces to fight the Turks. Once expelled from Yemen, it was agreed that the Imam would receive the mountainous regions of Yemen while the Idris would dominate the Tihama region and Asir. This agreement was witnessed by a deputation of "twenty-three notables and Kadis [judges] of the Zeidia under the presidency of Seyyid Ahmed ibn Yahya Amer of Shehara [representative of Imam Yahya]."[156] Subsequently, the Turks tried to turn the Idris against Yahya, and he refused on the grounds that he would not break his sworn agreement. The Turks then turned to Yahya, who apparently had no compunctions at all against abandoning his agreement with Asir, and allying himself with the Turks for the duration of the war. This act cost him the support of a number of Zaydi tribesmen, who then threw their support to the Idris.

Likewise, the Sunni population of Yemen wanted a strong leader as well to confront the occupying forces from both sides. Even though they did not use a religious justification for selecting an effective leader, notes from an intelligence briefing on Yemen in 1917 reported that Ibn Yahya claimed to have large numbers of non-Zaydis under his influence, and demanded that the British communicate with him only, claiming that "he [the Imam] can call up the whole of Yemen at once. . .and that all the tribes are on [his] side."[157]

The figure of Yahya comes across in the official files as a very clever manipulator, capable of using every means at his disposal to string the British along. A few examples from the record help to explain why his enemies found him so difficult to outmaneuver. One way the Imam maintained control in his kingdom was by strapping his sole minting machine to a camel

[156] Ibid., 442.

[157] *The Arab Bulletin*, vol. II (1917) no. 58, 323.

and transporting it around the highlands of Yemen where there were established munitions factories. The minting of coins is a right held exclusively by governments, and a powerful way to reinforce a leader's authority. The use of his own coinage to purchase munitions in support of his army, when added to his religious aristocratic heritage as a descendant of the sons of Fatima helped to secure an Imam's position, although a rival claimant could still lodge a claim against him and start the process of determining the rightful Imam all over again.[158] These are in general agreement with what Zaydis themselves appeared to practice in the selection process of their Imam.

A remarkable story about Yahya's talent for propaganda is related in a 1928 communication from the Aden Resident to the High Commissioner of Egypt (at that time, George Lloyd). A presumably red-faced Major-General Stewart had to explain that the Imam lied when he bragged in a published article in *Majallat Ash-Sharq-el-Adna* (a Cairo newspaper) that he had ordered leaflets dropped by his airplane flown over Sheikh Othman and Lahej (both parts of the Protectorate) "to warn the British government against continuing their occupation of the Protectorate which was part and parcel of Yemen."[159] The Imam had further noted that the Resident was thus motivated to send a mission of "three eminent individuals" to discuss matters with him. Stewart concludes his letter by stating that "both [of] these statements are entirely false."[160] At the time of the newspaper article, the Italian government of Eritrea had sent seven old aircraft to the Imam, and accepted ten promising Yemeni men to train to fly at their center in Milano, from which they graduated in August of 1928, seven months after the publication of the

[158] *The Arab Bulletin*, vol. II, (1917) 326-327. "Remarks on the Imamate."

[159] FO 141 589. Letter dated 28 January 1928 from Aden Resident Major-General Sir Keith Stewart to the High Commissioner of Egypt, George Lloyd.

[160] Ibid.

article.[161] In a published response two weeks later, an "Aden correspondent" for the newspaper denounced the original story as "far from the truth" and asking the Imam's agents to "be fair and just and abandon the sectarian fanaticism which destroys the country and creates enmity."[162]

A final anecdote of the Imam is found in the British records concerning the pilgrimage season of 1918. The Arab Bureau had documentation concerning Yahya's ambition to govern the whole of Yemen, not just the highlands where the Zaydis lived. What surprised them is that his ambition appeared to stretch beyond southwest Arabia. He led ten thousand armed Yemenis (approximately eight thousand of whom were Zaydi) to Mecca, where he was promptly disarmed by the Hashemite authorities. There does not seem to be any precedent or justification under Zaydi teaching for this megalomaniac desire for territorial expansion. Ibn Yahya may have been a Shia leader, but he did not hesitate to use the power of his religious title to try to expand his popularity with Muslims beyond his own Zaydi sect.

Yahya reinforced his political authority by emphasizing his power through the religious titles that he used, whether he was actually eligible to use them or not. One such title is that of Amir al-Mumineen, which indicates caliphal authority. It is a title which has also been taken by some in the present day, including the former leader of the Afghani Taliban. Mustapha Kemal abolished the Caliphate in March of 1924, and the title self-selected by Sharif Hussein of Mecca. The title became defunct in 1925, when Ibn Saud annexed the Hijaz.

Politically-his use of propaganda and his willingness to partner with other imperial powers to strengthen his kingdom through trade agreements, especially those that dealt with armaments, planes, and other military hardware. What is clear is that the ultimate success of Ibn

[161] Lennart Andersson, "Wings Over the Desert: Aviation on the Arabian Peninsula", accessed on December 29, 2013., http://www.artiklar.z-bok.se/Arabia-2.html.

[162]FO 141/589, Translated letter from February 15, 1928 published in *Majallat Ash-Sharq-el-Adna* (Egypt).

Yahya is that he was a shrewd religious and political negotiator among his own people as well as the Turks and the British, especially members of the India Office and the Government of India. Both colonial powers recognized that the power of his office, expressed through political machinations or through the guise of religion, would be ignored at their own peril.

CHAPTER FOUR

THE POLITICAL ECONOMY OF THE RED SEA

4.1 Lieutenant Wyman's Report

> Yemen trade [has] vast potentialities, but . . .its geographical position and the exaggerated importance given to other Arab potentates more readily accessible, [has] obscured its importance both commercially and politically.[163]

The Arabs of Yemen-and especially the figure of Imam Yahya- demonstrated significant economic agency in the period between the two World Wars, resulting in the attention and rising anxiety of the British with regard to the activities of the Italians, the French, and the Soviets. This is especially remarkable as the discovery of oil on the Arabian Peninsula did not occur until relatively late (1938) and had a far greater impact on what came to be Saudi Arabia to the North than it did in the southwest portion of the Peninsula. While the possibility of Mandate status had been entertained by at least some former Aden Residents, those making the final treaties emanating from the Paris Peace Conference had decided to forego Mandate status for Yemen. Likewise, Colonel Jacob's plan to build the infrastructure of Yemen by installing medical facilities and schools for the sons of chiefs was ignored. This, however, did not mean that London and Delhi were unconcerned with the economic future of Yemen, nor that the events taking place in the interior-away from the coastal littoral-had no impact on either Great Britain or India.

In January, 1918, Lieutenant George Wyman Bury, R.N.V.R., anticipating the end of the war, compiled a report in which he explored the future trade prospects of Yemen once the

[163] Harold F. Jacob cited in D. G. Hogarth, "Wahabism and British Interests," *Journal of the British Institute of International Affairs* 4, no. 2 (1925), 80.

Ottomans had been vacated. The report was then circulated to Reginald Wingate (who at that time was no longer Governor-General of the Sudan, but instead had succeeded Lord Kitchener as High Commissioner of Egypt), as well as the Foreign Office and Arab Bureau.

The first line of the report indicates that the intention of the research was ". . .to extend but not to supersede the remarks on trade in the Yemen Handbook. . ."[164] The handbook referred to is undoubtedly the country briefing books (commonly referred to as "blue books") which were issued to military personnel before arriving in country. In other words, the information ostensibly had intelligence/military significance, and thus should be included in the normal briefings and materials provided to soldiers in the field.

Among the points taken by Bury with regard to ports, "Hodeidah is the only one worth considering"[165] and "the main gateway of Yemen commerce."[166] The Ottomans had established a military thoroughfare connecting Hodeidah and Sanaa, although it did not hold much commercial promise, according to Lieutenant Bury. Indeed, he stated that "Yemen is no Eldorado."[167] In the aftermath of war, Yemen needed staple products, such as Ghi and petroleum, which made it enticing to importers.[168] Bury closes with a discussion of the desirability of Yemen as a market to importers, especially with regard to armaments.

> Long before the war certain well-financed firms of cosmopolitan origin were using one or two African ports of the Red Sea to supply small-arms to Yemen and the Aden hinterland. . .After the war every gun-market in both hemispheres will

[164] FO 141/816, The Future of Yemen Trade", Report by Wyman Bury, January 26, 1918.

[165] Ibid., 1.

[166] Ibid., 4.

[167] Ibid., 11, 26.

[168] Ibid., 14.

> be glutted with modern weapons of precision and, for such, Yemen offers an alluring market. If this traffic is not firmly checked Yemen can never hope to develop along peaceful lines and embittered intertribal strife will not only rend her but her neighbours.[169]

The key to this quotation is that the "neighbours" to whom Bury referred was Aden and the surrounding chiefs, located in the zones of the Eastern and Western Protectorates. He was establishing the baseline economic and military justification for staying involved in Yemen's affairs. Wingate deemed it sufficiently significant that he ordered additional copies to be distributed to the Foreign Office and the Commercial Intelligence Section.

4.2 The Gun-Running Italians

To fully comprehend how the Italians assumed so much power in the Red Sea, one has to go back to the latter half of the nineteenth century. Prior to the 1860s, Great Britain held leverage (if not land) on the African side of the Red Sea. Under the leadership of Palmerston and later, Disraeli, Great Britain held to a policy that prioritized timely communication with India, and thus, the short route through the Red Sea. Great Britain affirmed their support for Ethiopia, the Shoa, Danakil, and Somali by establishing treaties of protection against outside interference. This served the purpose of safeguarding supply routes to Aden while at the same time not committing to the long-term financial commitment which occupation would entail. When Gladstone ascended to power in 1868, priorities changed. No longer was British control of the Red Sea route a priority. Gladstone underscored this new policy when he stated "This will hardly make the difference to us between life and death in the maintenance of our Indian Empire."[170]

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[169] Ibid., 27.

[170] W. E. Gladstone, "Aggression on Egypt and Freedom in the East", reprinted in *Gleanings of Past Years* (1879), iv. 348-53. Cited in Agatha Ramm "Great Britain and the Planting of Italian Power in the Red Sea, 1868-1885", *The English Historical Review*, Vol. 59, No. 234 (May, 1944), p. 213.

These words would soon be regretted once the Berlin Conference of 1885 initiated a flurry of colonization on the African continent. Gladstone's words would be put to the test.

The prevalence of armaments continued to be a problem long after the war ended and the Ottoman Empire ceased to exist. Many career Ottoman soldiers decided not to return home at all, but decided to stay in Yemen and continue what they knew best: the teaching of the use of weapons. With them were surplus rifles which retreating Ottomans left behind, and which were used to escalate tension between and among the tribes, as well as against the British, with whom the Imam had not yet signed an agreement.[171] Exacerbating this mix were Italian arms merchants who-in the absence of a British colony, mandate, or some other formal colonial structure in Yemen proper-believed they had a perfect right to exploit this gaping legal hole by supplying the Imam with arms. Thus, on the one hand, the Colonial Office was funding and arming the Idris of Asir, with whom it had had two wartime agreements (1915 and 1917) while the Italians were doing the same for his highland rival, the Zaydi Imam.[172] Although it was clear that the Colonial Office had promised help to the Idris if attacked by foreign powers, no such promise was made to defend the Idris when involved in a dispute with an internal (Arab) enemy. If that were not enough to make the British reconsider their Yemen policy, Ibn Saud offered to assist the Idris against the Imam, although the Idris had not accepted his offer, fearing that "he would not be able to get rid of him afterwards."[173] The Colonial Office called a meeting on 16 July 1926 to try to see what could be done to keep this stand-off from escalating. Beyond that ". . .the question. .

[171] Although at least three formal attempts would be made, a formal agreement between the British and the Imam Yahya would not take place until 1934, largely because of Britain's preexisting treaty with the Idris of Asir, an enemy of the Zaidi Imam.

[172] CO 537/656 Conference Minutes from meeting held at the Colonial Office on 16 July 1926. Present were representatives of not only the Colonial Office, but also the Foreign Office, India Office, Aden Resident, Treasury, Admiralty, War Office, and Air Ministry.

[173] CO 537/656 Conference Minutes from meeting held at the Colonial Office on 16 July 1926.

.was whether anything could be done. . .to prevent the Italians from securing. . .a position on the Eastern side of the Red Sea which might be dangerous to us."[174]

The perceived threat was two-fold, the first menace being the Italian expansion into the Farsan Islands and the port at Kamaran Island, creating a presence on both sides of the Red Sea. The Italians tried to claim a presence on the Farsan Islands at the Peace Conference, but the British were able to stave off further Italian queries by stating that the Farsan Islands were a critical link along the pilgrimage route from India, and British doctors needed to be there to enact a quarantine against epidemic disease should the need arise. Covertly, both the Farsan Islands and Kamaran were perfectly situated as listening posts which connected Cairo, Aden, and Delhi. The other menace was the expansive ego of the Imam should he succeed in overcoming the Idris. General Stewart, the Aden Resident, worried that such a victory would embolden the Imam into more aggressive behavior in the Aden Protectorate. The conference attendees agreed that there were no viable legal grounds to forbid the Italians from selling weapons to the Imam, and so the decision was made to lift the embargo on arms sales and allow a private British syndicate to legally supply weapons to the Idris. That way neither the Colonial Office nor the Aden Residency was seen as interfering in what was essentially an internal squabble between two Yemeni political figures.

Italians interfered in other ways, such as providing support and transportation to Abdul Wasai al Wasai, an agent for the Imam who journeyed to Egypt and Syria "to promote the Imam's claims to the Caliphate" in 1926.[175] Muhammad Rashid Rida along with other

[174] Ibid.

[175] FO 141/589, Letter dated October 19, 1926, from the Acting High Commissioner of Egypt, Neville Henderson, to the Acting Political Resident, Aden.

prominent Muslims had also issued statements of support for the Imam. Did neither the Italians nor Rida realize that the Imam was a Zaydi Shia, and thus not ideologically attuned to being the leader of the Sunni majority within Dar-al-Islam? "Economic competition is both natural and beneficial, but there are obvious dangers in a situation where European commercial competition is identified with Arab political rivalry."[176]

The Americans provide another window by which Italian activities in support of the Imam can be verified. The American Consul at Aden warned that the Italians were flagrantly violating the St. Germain Convention by selling surplus arms from the Turko-Italian war, as well as maintaining gunboats at the port of Hodeidah.[177] Even more troubling for the British were the inroads that the Italians appeared to be making by promising the construction of a wireless station and hospital for the Imam's use. The tone of the consular report is one of unabashed admiration for the bold offers the Italians made to the Imam. "They [Italians] gambled on the Imam and won, at a time when Aden and Djibouti firms were closing their Hodeidah branches and withdrawing their goods to safety. The Italians therefore had an open field. . .and they made the most of it."[178]

[176] FO 141 589 , Memorandum on the Imam-Idrisi Conflict in Arabia, Sir Austen Chamberlain to the Italian Ambassador, 9 Sept. 1926.

[177] Reginald Sinclaire, Documents on the History of Southwest Arabia, Vol. I "Disturbance at Hodeidah, Arabia [Despatch of US Consul, Aden, Oct. 21, 1924.]

[178] Reginald Sinclaire, Documents on the History of Southwest Arabia, Vol. I "Italian Activities in Arabia" [Despatch of US Consul, Ade Nov. 17, 1925]

4.3 The Slave-Trading French

Background

Slave traffic along the Red Sea pre-dates the rise of Islam in the seventh century. Roman texts dating from the first century C.E. refer to human trafficking.[179] "[T]hose sailing off the middle course are plundered, and those surviving shipwrecks are taken for slaves. And so they too are continually taken prisoners by the chiefs and kings of Arabia. . .Navigation is dangerous along this whole coast of Arabia." [180] According to the ancient writer, many of those slaves ended up working gathering frankincense in an "unhealthy and pestilential" environment along the south Arabian coast.[181]

With the coming of Islam, the Qur'an and the Hadith appeared to sanction the institution of slavery. Slavery continued to be an integral part of the economy of the Red Sea, as slaves worked as fishermen, caravan porters, and domestic workers. The Mamluk Empire and the Ottoman Empire had both sanctioned slavery.[182] One of the strange truths is that Ottoman slavery often provided opportunities in life for improvement via the *devshirme*, a type of annual tax in the form of children, who would be taken from disparate parts of the empire to Istanbul, where the men would receive religious instruction and be trained in clerical and military skills. As for women, those most fortunate were prepared for lives in harems as wives of Porte officials, often receiving dowries from their owners to make them more appealing for marriage. Still

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[179] *The Periplus of the Erythraean Sea: Travel and Trade in the Indian Ocean by a Merchant of the First Century*, Ancient History Sourcebook, Fordham University, http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/ancient/periplus.asp. accessed on December 23, 2013.

[180] The Periplus of the Erythraean Sea, 20.

[181] Ibid., 29.

[182] The Mamluks annexed Yemen briefly in 1516, while the Ottomans controlled Yemen during two separate periods in the 16th and then again in the 19th-early 20th centuries.

others-perhaps most- were trafficked for domestic work. While Islamic law prohibits the enslavement of fellow Muslims, there is no doubt that this prohibition was widely ignored.[183] These historical and religious realities made slavery's abolition along Yemen's Red Sea coast another difficulty for Aden's panopticon.

Treaty Regulation of Slavery

Concern over Yemen's involvement in the Red Sea slave trade would bring two contending issues of paramount importance to the Foreign Office: freedom of the seas and the abolition of the slave trade. The British Parliament legally abolished the slave trade in 1807 per the Slave Trade Act, and immediately began patrolling the African coast to enforce the Act. Abolition of the institution of slavery itself was far more difficult, and was adopted as the official policy of the empire only in 1833. This does not mean that slavery suddenly ceased to exist, and there was a vast gap between what was desired (the end of slavery) and what was actually taking place.

The Brussels Conference Act (1890) followed, which did much to foster the "Scramble for Africa" which the Berlin Conference had initiated just five years before. It sanctioned the establishment of infrastructure (telegraph, railways) and colonial administrations to protect missionaries and bring an end to the capture, transport and sale of Africans. As a result, the Brussels Conference Act did more than any other European action to use the pretense of ending the African slave trade to colonize Africa itself.[184] It also affirmed the notion of international responsibility for this "civilizing mission." Yet, while the Europeans moved in (including the

[183] There are numerous references in the literature to poor families who went on Haj, only to encounter financial troubles, and who became obliged to sell a member of the extended family to cover the cost to return home.

[184] Suzanne Miers, *Slavery in the Twentieth Century* (Walnut Creek, CA: AltaMira Press, 2003), 21.

Italians and French, who would later confound British interests there), many 19th and early 20th century travel accounts from Arabia confirm that the proliferation of slaves from Africa in Arabia continued unabated, as it had in ancient times.[185]

The Treaty of Saint -Germain en-Laye (1919) was a further attempt to solidify opposition to slavery. However, with so many nations involved around the Red Sea basin, and so many individual agreements between imperial powers and tribal leaders, the task was formidable. It was the League of Nations' sponsored Slavery Convention (1926) which provided the most successful impetus to solidify opposition to slavery.[186]

Finally, article 7 of the Treaty of Jedda (1927), signed just nine years after World War One, contained Ibn Saud's promise to "cooperate by all the means at [his] disposal with His Britannic Majesty in the suppression of the slave trade."[187] The hope was that the British authorities could invoke this clause when demanding to search ships flying Hejazi flags, especially since so many of the slaves suspected of being spirited across the Red Sea to ports in Yemen ultimately ended up in Saudi Arabia.[188]

Extent of Red Sea Slavery

By 1929, British officials were congratulating themselves for reaching the point where there was "very little if any wholesale seaborne traffic" between the eastern and western coasts

[185] See Charles Doughty's *Travels in Arabia Deserta*, 1888.

[186] Hertslet 's *Commercial Treaties* (London, 1827- 1925), Vol. XXII, pp. 1024-1062.

[187] CO 732/43/10 5 1802, No. 79064. Letter dated May 20, 1930, from Mr. Barnes of the Admiralty to Mr. Rendel of the Foreign Office. "Search of vessels in Red Sea and Persian Gulf for arms and slaves."

[188] Saudi Arabia did not abolish slavery officially until 1962.

of the Red Sea.[189] By October, 1928 one observer stated that from French Somaliland, "only ten or twelve dhows cross per year and it is six years since a slave dhow was captured."[190]

It is striking that while official discourse regarding slavery seemed to indicate that the problem was nearly solved, private memos, Government Code and Cypher communications, and minutes from classified meetings seemed to indicate otherwise. Based on the documentary evidence a reasonable conclusion can be made that the Red Sea slave trade continued to be a lucrative and viable business in the years following the war, and that Aden did not have it fully under control.[191] For example, a quarterly report on Red Sea Slavery from June 1929 includes a note of a conversation with a Greek gentleman in an official position in Addis Ababa. He points out several features of interest. . .

> The trade is more extensive than the Navy thinks and is worked without any closed season. The trade is extremely lucrative and traders can afford to run intelligence services, in which persons in respectable positions often act as agents. The sheikhs themselves are 'in it' and get 'squeeze'. The slaves make a great part of their journey overland.[192]

This evidence indicates that the Arab traders found a way around the regulations, and the slave traffic continued, albeit in reduced numbers and under different names. In order to deflect attention away from it the decision had been made to de-fund the solution, and to engage in a propaganda campaign to deny it continued to exist.

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[189] League of Nations, *Report of the Advisory Committee of Experts*, September 25, 1931 (C.618.1932.VI.), 7.

[190] AIR 2/775 1927-1931, Minute Sheet of the Air Ministry addressed to the CAS from the DCAS, dated October 11, 1928.[signature obscured]

[191] The Government Code and Cypher School, which handled signals intelligence, became the Government Communications Headquarters (GCHQ) in 1946.

[192] AIR 2/775 1927-1931, Minute Sheet of the Air Ministry, August 17, 1929. Quarterly Report on Red Sea Slavery, signed by R. H. Peck and addressed to D.C.A.S.

Suzanne Miers, a leading scholar on twentieth century slavery, believes that the demarcation line in ending slavery was World War One, by which time slavery had "been much reduced."[193] Perhaps this is an accurate assumption for the African continent, overall, using a strict definition of slavery. Nevertheless, documents from the post-war period indicate that there continued a steady flow of slaves and other types of unfree labor extending from Ethiopia, down to French Somaliland in the Horn of Africa and across the Bab al-Mandeb, into Yemen and beyond. Most of these are anecdotal references, gleaned from various Cabinet, Colonial, Foreign, and War Office memoranda. An example of the aforementioned is a confidential memorandum from September, 1925, by the Oriental Secretary Philip Zaphiro, and circulated to members of Parliament, and the Resident of Aden. "I have been informed from very reliable sources that the trading in slaves at Tajura [French Somaliland] instead of diminishing has lately increased."[194] Zaphiro contended that a caravan of over eighty slaves from Ethiopia arrived in Tajura, led by a Muslim from Jimma.[195] The memo further detailed the elaborate plan engineered by the slave merchants to disguise their merchandise. The African slaves were "clothed like Arabs and the women likewise, with covered faces like the Arab women. They are kept in different houses about ten miles inland from Tajura, and [then] taken in dhows. . .ten at a time, across to Arabia"

[193] Miers, *Slavery in the Twentieth Century,* 43.

[194] ADM 116/2474 "Red Sea Traffic: 1925-1929", Confidential Memorandum "Slave trading at Tajura, French Dankali Country" Enclosure in Addis Ababa dispatch No. 137 of 28/9/25. It was initialed by PPZ, ostensibly Phillip Zaphiro, the Oriental Secretary, and forwarded to the Right Honourable Austen Chamberlain, M.P., as well as to the Resident at Aden, by C. H. Bentick.

[195] ADM 116/2472 Zaphiro memo.The memorandum indicated that the slaves traveled from Dessie (Abyssinia) but that the slave owner/merchant was from Jimma, a different location in Abyssinia, to the south and west of Dessie. It is notable at this time that the Italians had made progress in the region by establishing a telegraph line and a road connecting Dessie to Asmara and Addis Ababa.

where they would then engage their agents in Aden who had alerted them to the movements of the British.[196]

The persistence of the slave trade between Yemen and Africa and the budgetary constraints of the Exchequer may well have led the British to believe that bringing it to an end was an insurmountable problem. Even more, it is perhaps this very concern that kept Arabia (specifically Yemen) from becoming a Mandate.[197] One of the requirements for a Class B Mandatory power (i.e. those located on the African continent) was to eliminate slavery. Even though Yemen is not located in Africa, it was understood that slavery was equally entrenched there as it was across the Red Sea.

Importation from Africa

The fact that the slave trade and arms trafficking were intimately intertwined, and involved two of Britain's allies (Italy and France) further complicated matters. Capture and importation from Africa in exchange for rifles was one way the demand for slaves was met. Even before the war's end, officials recognized the link between armaments and human trafficking. They determined that it would be "absolutely essential that France should close the arms traffic at Jibuti [sic] after the war if the [slave] contraband traffic was to end." [198] The large surplus of armaments left over in Yemen at the conclusion of the war destabilized the area and played a role in the proliferation of the slave trade from across the Red Sea. As late as 1925 the Oriental Secretary Philip Zaphiro communicated with Foreign Secretary Austen Chamberlain, Charles

[196] ADM 116/2472 Zaphiro memo.

[197] Part of the obligation of a Mandatory Power was to bring the slave trade in check. It is the author's contention that this must have figured prominently in the decision to reject Mandatory status for any part of Arabia.

[198] CAB 24/143, Eastern Report, no. 14, May 5, 1917, "Abyssinia-Arms Traffic."

Henry Bentick, Minister and Consul-General in Ethiopia, and the Aden Resident, that it "appears that a great number of *Fusil Gras* rifles are in the hands of the Arabs in Yemen, captured, or left behind by the Turks when they evacuated the Arab country. Those rifles now are imported by the Arabs to Tajura [in French Somaliland] in exchange for slaves."[199] The memorandum further alleges that the rifles were sold in Ethiopia, north east of Tajura, and then the slaves, who were dressed as Arabs, were brought to Tajura, and taken across the Red Sea ten at a time.[200] The initial response from French officials in Djibouti was one of disinterest, even though Zaphiro alleged that forty to fifty slaves were being sent to Arabia in this manner, on a monthly basis.[201] Bentinck wrote to Chamberlain in December of 1925, suggesting that France was the obvious power to address slavery originating in Tajura.[202]

Foreign Office official John Murray sent a letter to the Secretary of the Admiralty in June of 1926, relating an example of the lax French oversight of the slave trade. Apparently an official of the Admiralty visited the French governor of Djibouti and discussed slave-trading in Tajura. The governor insisted that no slaves could be taken to Arabia because he had "established police posts at Obok, Korankar, Muiel and Doubia and had a dhow with two machine guns which

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[199] ADM 116/2474 "Red Sea Slave Traffic: 1925-1929", Confidential Memorandum dated Sept 28, 1925 entitled "Slave trading at Tajura, French Dankali Country" Enclosure in Addis Adaba dispatch No. 137 of 28/9/25. Ameen Rihani, Lebanese-American writer and author of *Around the Coasts of Arabia* (1930), pointed out that the port of Tajura was "independent of the Abyssinian Government and. . .not wholly under French colonial control. . .in fact an autonomous territory enjoying French protection." 225.

[200] ADM 116/2474 "Red Sea Slave Traffic: 1925-1929", Confidential Memorandum dated Sept 28, 1925 entitled "Slave trading at Tajura, French Dankali Country" Enclosure in Addis Adaba dispatch NO. 137 of 28/9/25.

[201] Ibid.

[202] ADM 116/2474 "Red Sea Slave Traffic: 1925-1929", Letter dated 22 December 1925 No. 222 (J 268/148/1) Confidential. Bentinck's concern regarding the persistence of slavery was no doubt sincere: By all accounts a devout man, upon retirement Bentinck became an ordained Anglican priest. Yet, it is clear that while the slaves used Tajura as the point of departure for slave traffic, it did not represent the origin of the vast majority of slaves, which were funneled southward from Sudan and Ethiopia.

patrolled the coast day and night."[203] The official did not contradict him, but noted that "during the seven days which he spent at Jibuti [sic] . . . the dhow in question remained at anchor in the harbor the whole time."[204]

Bentinck may well have been eager to divert attention to French Somaliland and the lax oversight paid to catching slave traders there in order to deflect the focus away from strategic negotiations taking place between Britain's Foreign Office and Ethiopia. As British Consul-General, Bentinck was in a position to understand the sensitive situation in Ethiopia and the need for diplomacy regarding the issue of slavery. As early as the 1906 Tripartite Treaty, the Foreign Office achieved French and Italian acknowledgement of British special interests in the region. The successful collection of taxes and debt repayment in Egypt which Evelyn Baring, Lord Cromer oversaw was tied to the success of agricultural interests which were themselves linked to control of the headwaters of the Blue Nile.(It is estimated that eighty-four percent of the water that eventually reached Egypt originated in Abyssinia.)[205] Maintaining the economic health of Egypt and the Sudan depended upon control of the Nile's headwaters, and so Britain diligently lobbied for the construction of a dam at Lake Tana in the years following the conclusion of the war. (The Colonial Office remained in Egypt until 1922, while the Anglo-Egyptian Condominium in the Sudan continued until 1956.)[206] It was precisely at this time that a young Ras Tafari transformed Ethiopia, transitioning from Regent to being crowned Emperor Haile

[203] ADM 116/2474, "Red Sea Traffic: 1925-1929", Letter from John Murray at the Foreign Office to the Secretary of the Admiralty., June 10, 1926.

[204] Ibid.

[205] James McCann, "Ethiopia, Britain, and Negotiations for the Lake Tana Dam, 1922-1935," *The International Journal of African Historical Studies* 14 No. 4 (1981), 669.

[206] While Britain nominally withdrew from Egypt in 1922, it maintained military presence in Suez until 1936. The Anglo-Egyptian Condominium in the Sudan did not end until 1955.

Selassie in his own right. Eager for the project, but distrustful of Europeans, he tantalized Britain with the prospect of agreeing to a concession to construct a dam on Lake Tana. In 1923 the League of Nations admitted Ethiopia in exchange for promising to end slavery, which made Ethiopia sensitive to any accusations of continuing the exportation of slaves secretly through Tajura. In the end, Britain failed to obtain the concession, which meant that Italy had a chance to take advantage of the power vacuum thus created. This allowed Italy to lay the foundation for its outright occupation by 1935.

The Haj

The French response to the British pursuit of the origin of the slaves from Tajura was that the British themselves were to blame for the slave trade, and that British-controlled Port Sudan was the likely embarkation point. While not willing to completely forgive France for its laxity in addressing slavery in Tajura, the French allegation underscored an earlier British suspicion that at least a portion of Africans who found themselves enslaved in Arabia were "maintained. . .by the sale of relations and dependents by persons performing the pilgrimage."[207] Port Sudan was one of the largest embarkation points for the Haj during the month of Ramadan and part of the Anglo-Egyptian Condominium. The actual way this operation was thought to proceed was that groups making the pilgrimage would invite expanded numbers of travelers, including community and extended family members. As free travelers they would depart from Port Sudan. En route to Mecca, however, they would become enslaved and would thus be sold upon arrival in

[207] ADM 116/2474 "Red Sea Slave Traffic: 1925-1929". Note from Monsieur Bertelot to Mr. Phipps. June 25th, 1926.

Arabia.[208] This response from the French had repercussions in terms of British policy vis a vis Yemen. If in fact true, this would mean that British agents in the Sudan could not be responsible, as the enslavement had not yet taken place while still in the Africa port. Likewise, the route from Port Sudan to Mecca would have gone through the port of Jeddah, which at this point was under the control of Ibn Saud, who himself had over one hundred slaves of his own, despite giving lip service to the elimination of the slave trade.[209] On the other hand, if Tajura was the point of origin for the majority of slaves, the route to northern Arabia would have been more circuitous, involving hiding the slaves in the Yemen littoral during the day, and sailing northward on dhows under cover of darkness. In a letter from the Foreign Office to the Secretary of the Admiralty in July of 1927, it was determined that "The course of the traffic is believed to be chiefly from Tajura or Obok along the coast to Siyan (opposite of Perim) and thence across to somewhere south of Hodeida, probably Kor Ghulafakieyeh. From there. . .up the coast inside the Farsan reefs."[210] This would mean that it was incumbent upon the British to add this issue to the list of problems in which they would need to involve individual tribal chiefs along the Tihama coast.

A final source of slaves was by the purchase of native Yemenis from within Yemen itself. Many of these slaves were then sold to wealthier Arabs to the north. The British realized that there was no way to solve the dilemma of slavery without invading and undermining the sacred autonomy of the Yemen tribes. Interfering would also be a breach of existing agreements with Ibn Saud in the Nejd.

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[208] ADM 116/2474 "Red Sea Slave Traffic: 1925-1929", Letter dated 9 February 1926, No. 150 (J 226/148/1) from John Murray for the Secretary of State to Lord Lloyd of Dolobran GCSI, GCIE.

[209] AIR 2/775, 1927-1931 Memorandum on Red Sea Slavery and the Slave Trade, March 25, 1930, paragraph 17, from the Charge d'Affaires at Jedda, Mr. W. L. Byrd.

[210] ADM 116/2474 "Red Sea Slave Traffic: 1925-1929", Letter from Foreign Office to Secretary of the Admiralty dated 20 July 1927.

The British Response

The response of the British Government to the continued trafficking of slaves between the two Red Sea coasts was tepid and fraught with characteristic inter-agency disagreements. The cost of policing the slave trade, combined with the lack of intelligence on the ground meant that they would need to reach out to the Italians and the French, both of whom were looking for just such an opportunity to extend their authority into the Red Sea. The British jealously guarded their control of Kamaran and the Farsan Islands, and had no desire to share those strategic locations with their imperial competitors. This became even more important as it became clear that the Italians were moving to embrace a fascist regime and warming towards Germany in the early 1930s.

The first overtures to address the regional slave trade were low cost, non-military procedures. An idea that offered some promise was for officials to channel African pilgrims via Jeddah, where there were resident British officials who could monitor the numbers of people entering and leaving through the port. Because women and children were among the most desired by slave traders, another possibility was to limit the children and women going on pilgrimage, but the concern was that these measures "might be represented as unwarrantable interference in religious matters."[211]

Eventually, the War Office forged the path to a solution, and it came in two distinct waves, neither of which was completely satisfactory. With the Red Sea covering 1,200 miles from the Suez Canal in the north, southward to the Bab al-Mandeb, and 190 miles wide, the

[211] ADM 116/2474 "Red Sea Slave Traffic: 1925-1929". Paragraph no.55. Mr. Bond.

problem of surveying 169,000 square miles of the Red Sea seemed insurmountable without the assistance of the Admiralty.[212] When this failed, the Air Ministry took its turn.

Authorities believed the Admiralty's Red Sea Patrol held the best promise of addressing the slave trade, trusting that the Patrol could intercept slaving dhows in international waters before they entered Yemen territory. The assumption that the majority of slaves were Africans who found their way to Yemen had been problematic from the outset, because no British or Government of India entity controlled either the major embarkation ports in Eritrea and French Somaliland or the points of arrival, which included coastal Yemen, from Perim to the Farsan Island littoral. Lacking agreements with tribal leaders beyond the Western Protectorate, Aden was at an impasse. It was essential to intercept the slaves before they made landfall, where maritime law would dominate. The Admiralty held that it could monitor the slave traffic and keep it in check.

In addition to the legal issues encountered when deciding to board a vessel for investigation, he Admiralty faced two other problems. First, the Red Sea Patrol consisted of only two sloops, the H.M.S. Cornflower and the H.M.S. Clematis, and both had full duty schedules before factoring in time to run down slavers. These duties (when not in Malta for refitting and repairs) included. . .

(a) Constant attendance at Jeddah, including for a time the maintenance of communication by W/T [wireless telegraph].
(b) Protection of Akaba against threatened attack, and evacuation of Ex King Hussein.
(c) Safeguarding the landing and embarkation of Pilgrims at Rabigh and Jeddah.

[212] www.worldatlas.com, "Red Sea", accessed on December 23, 2013.

(d) Protection of Kameran from threatened attack.[213]

On at least two occasions the Admiralty sent destroyers to enhance the coverage of the sloops, but their cumbersome size and the extra cost involved rendered them not feasible as a permanent solution.[214]

A second problem the Red Sea Patrol encountered was that the two sloops assigned to hunting down the slave-carrying dhows were inadequate for the 169, 000 square mile coverage area and nature of the terrain called for. After a time, the Patrol focused on the narrowest point separating the Horn of Africa from the Arabian Peninsula, the Bab al-Mandeb. Seemingly, narrowing down the search to this fourteen-mile expanse of water would make the seizure of slave dhows easier. However, enterprising slavers would put out across the waters under cover of night. Once across, they "work northwards along the Yemen coast up to the comparative protection of the reef area north of Kamaran. . .[but]it is probable that slaves are also landed on the Southern Arabian coast anywhere between Perim and Mokalla."[215] The shallow littoral of Yemen is dotted with small islands and reefs, and no doubt the larger sloops used by the Patrol would have been limited by their equipment in pursuing the more easily maneuverable slave dhows.

By 1930, the legality of searching and seizing vessels in the Red Sea came under question in official correspondence. Two documents governed the situation: the General Act of the

[213] ADM 116/2474 "Red Sea Slave Traffic: 1925-1929", Memo signed by Alu Peck, D.O.D. dated Nov. 5, 1925, No. 02895/25. A notation at the bottom of the memo is signed by K. Dewar and states that it appears to "be a matter for diplomatic rather than naval action." The "W/T" refers to wireless telegraph.

[214] ADM 116/2474 "Red Sea Slave Traffic: 1925-1929", Memo signed by Alu Peck, D.O.D. dated Nov. 5, 1925, No. 02895/25. Destroyers were larger than sloops, and thus incurred higher fuel costs as well as canal usage fees.

[215] AIR 2/775, 1927-1931 Memorandum on Red Sea Slavery and the Slave Trade, March 25, 1930, paragraph 34, from the Charge d'Affaires at Jedda, Mr. W. L. Byrd.

Brussels Conference, which was signed on July 2, 1890 and the Anglo-Turkish Treaty of 1881 for the suppression of the African slave trade- by the Ottoman Empire. Saudi Arabia's role was central in this issue, because even though the majority of slaves arrived at Yemen ports, they were channeled northward along the coast to Saudi ports. In Saudi Arabia, Ibn Saud questioned whether he inherited the responsibility to adhere to the latter treaty, seeing that the Ottoman Empire had been dissolved and he had not signed any subsequent treaty.[216] In Yemen, the Imam disavowed responsibility for this, as he had also done for the territorial treaties concluded between the British and the Ottomans in the areas of the Protectorates.

Another treaty which could possibly have been used to undergird the search and seizure of suspect dhows was the Treaty of Jeddah of 1927, concluded between Ibn Saud and "His Britannic Majesty in the suppression of the slave trade." However, the Senior Naval Officer (SNO) reported that "eighty per cent of the Arab dhows recently searched [for slaves] were from the Yemen."[217] This underscored the complexity of the problem for Britain, in that the most significant Yemeni leader along the Tihama coast was the Idris of Asir, who by this time fell under the nominal protection of Ibn Saud.[218] The other leader who could possibly command control was the Imam Yahya, who had originally been ignored by the British in favor of the Idris, and who now refused to conclude a treaty with them. Thus, there was no single Yemeni leader in 1930 with whom an existing treaty would suffice to solve this problem. There was no

[216] CO 732/43/10 5 1802 NO. 79064. "Arms Traffic and Slavery in the Red Sea and Persian Gulf 1930." Letter from Mr. Barnes of the Admiralty to Mr. Rendel of the Foreign Office, "Search of vessels in Red Sea and Persian Gulf for arms and slaves." We know, for instance, that Ibn Saud reneged on an obligation of Ottoman debt in the post-war period, so it is no surprise that he would question his responsibility to adhere to other Ottoman treaty obligations.

[217] Ibid.

[218] CO 732/43/10 5 1802 NO. 79064. "Arms Traffic and Slavery in the Red Sea and Persian Gulf 1930." Telegram sent Feb. 26, 1930 from Commander in Command-Mediterranean, R.A. Jackson, from the HMS Dhalia at Malta, dated 22 February, 1930 to Admiralty.

simple way to solve the problem, as any solution would require a response that would address each of the individual coastal tribes.

Thus, intercepting slave dhows on the water was too expensive and legally questionable, and the "illusory nature of the French and Italian patrol[s]" and the inability of the two Red Sea Sloops to cover such a large area led some to suggest air power as a solution.[219] Yet, this erupted in a torrent of inter-agency rivalry, as the Admiralty and the Air Ministry both tried to best the other. In August of 1928 one Air Ministry official stated in a memo that "We have always wanted to co-operate with the Navy in the suppression of the slave traffic if we could do so [but] it is much better that the proposal should come from the Foreign Office than from us."[220] Interception by air power held possibilities but also drawbacks. In its favor, Aden hoped that the mere newness of the technology could instill fear and compliance along the Tihama coastline, north of the Western Protectorate. It was believed that daily patrolling would be better than the "occasional arrival of a sloop" and that the "moral effect of the presence of aircraft would considerably reduce if not eliminate, the running of slave dhows across the Red Sea."[221] "The advantage of aircraft was that they could follow dhows carrying contraband into the shallow waters of the Yemeni littoral, where the naval sloops could not go. "When we have a flying boat with a COW gun in it, we shall be able to deal adequately with any dhow running either with guns or slaves."[222] Supporting air power was also significantly less expensive than increasing the

[219] AIR 2/775, 1927-1931. "Memorandum on Red Sea Slavery and the Slave Trade, March 25, 1930. British Charge d'Affaires at Jedda, Mr. W. L. Bond.

[220] Ibid.

[221] AIR 2/775, 1927-1931, Minute Sheet of the Air Ministry addressed to the CAS from the DCAS, October 11, 1928.

[222] Ibid. A COW gun refers to British automatic cannon attached to aircraft, produced by Coventry Ordnance Works. COW produced weapons for naval vessels as well as aircraft.

naval patrol to continuously ply the Red Sea, even if sufficient staff could be found to do it. On the other hand, having aircraft meant the occupation of some of the Red Sea islands which the Colonial Office had insisted to its European rivals should remain neutral.

The final element regarding the British and slaving along the coast of Yemen had to do with the moral responsibility of the British with regard to stopping slavery in the Red Sea. Ameen Rihani, a famous Lebanese-American writer and thinker in the 1920s and 1930s broached this very point in his *Around the Coasts of Arabia* (1930). In his chapter on the slave trade, he faults not only the Italians of Eritrea and the French of Somaliland, but also the British.

> What right has European civilization to exist in the East, what right have the Europeans to be there in its name, if its greatest heritage is lost, if its moral and spiritual ideals are dead?. . .I am in favor of a radical measure. Patrolling the Red Sea is not enough. Rescuing slaves and freeing them is not enough. But hang me a slave-dealer in Victoria Square in Aden, and see what will become of the slave-traffic in Tihamah, in Al-Hijaz, in all Arabia.[223]

Of course, the Aden Resident would not dare to do this, as he was fully aware that the very individuals with whom the government he represented had agreements were guilty of participating in the sale and profit of the slaves from Tajura.[224] Upon the visit of an Admiralty attaché visiting the Aden Resident Sir Stewart Symes, the official complained that "our prestige is being lowered by [our] policy, . . .whilst that of the Italians and even, perhaps, of the Russians is on the increase."[225]

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[223] Ameen Rihani, *Around the Coasts of Arabia* (New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1930), 227.

[224] Ibid., 229. Rihani relates a specific incident in which a Idrisi official (allies of the British) purchased a slave girl who had been landed outside of the city at night.

[225]CO 732/43/10,Telegram dated February 26, 1930, from Commander in Command-Mediterranean, R. A. Jackson, from the HMS Dhalia at Malta to Admiralty.

Although much energy and time was expended to bring a halt to the practice, slavery continued for decades after the end of World War One. In point of fact, Yemen and Saudi Arabia did not officially abolish slavery until 1962, forty-four years after the conclusion of World War One.[226]

4.4 The Communist Soviets

Russia (or more appropriately, post-1922, the Soviet Union), had several paramount reasons for seeking closer ties with Yemen in the years separating the two World Wars.. Historically, most of Russia's ports are frozen for much of the year, making maritime commerce and defense difficult. Because of this Russia has always been concerned with gaining access to warm water ports, and Yemen's key location buttressed by the Red Sea to the west and the Indian Ocean to the south held strategic appeal. Additionally, as the Soviet Union expanded to include parts of Central Asia, so, too, did her Muslim population. The Arabian Peninsula held iconic significance due to the location of Mecca and Medina, and establishing ties with the local leaders might assist in managing the Soviet Muslim states. A final reason for seeking closer ties involved the desire of the USSR to influence the rising tide of Pan-Arabism and Pan-Islamism in the direction of Marxism. While Yemen proper was not officially colonized by capitalist European powers, it lay on the periphery of the Raj's Aden, and across the Red Sea from European colonies such as Italian Somaliland, French Djibouti, and the Anglo-Egyptian Condominium of Sudan. It seemed ripe for recruitment.

The three guiding principles behind Soviet encroachment in Yemen can be summed up as follows: pragmatism, cooperation, and education. The need for pragmatism gradually dawned on Lenin and expanded under Stalin. In order to defeat imperialism, it was going to be necessary (at

[226] "Slaves in impoverished Yemen dream of freedom". *Al Arabiya*. 21 July 2010.

least temporarily) to partner with monarchs like Ibn Saud and the Imam Yahya against the "greater evil" of imperialism. The timing of these partnerships also coincided with the rise of the Pan-Islamic movement, a bane to hard-core Marxists, who viewed religion as the "opiate of the people." The Pan-Islamists held the greatest and (geographically) broadest opportunity to defeat Britain, Italy, and France, the other imperial powers in the Red Sea. The Soviet willingness to pragmatically transform their program to embrace the Pan-Islamists and "bourgeoisie nationalists" allowed them the opportunity to initiate a socialist education among the people of the Arabian Peninsula.

The Colonial Office recognized that the Soviets could directly undermine the British Empire with its propaganda. In an address to foreign Muslims in December of 1917, Lenin stated that it was "[not]from Russia and her revolutionary government that your enslavement is to be expected, but from the European imperialist robbers."[227] This sort of rhetoric was very public and designed to motivate Muslims (and other colonized people) towards a socialist revolt. By 1923, the Soviet Union was concluding treaties with both Ibn Saud and Imam Yahya on the Arabian Peninsula, while the official positions of the India Office, Colonial Office, and Foreign Office was to not get involved, and to not physically expand beyond the Protectorates into Yemen proper.

Within a decade of the end of the Great War, the Zaydi Imam Yahya proactively established a formal trading agreement with the Soviet Union.. In January of 1928, Mr. M. G. Astakhof, the former Secretary of the Soviet embassy at Ankara, visited Hodeidah and Sanaa to discuss a possible commercial treaty with Imam Yahya. He stayed for six months, returning to Russia in July. After another official made a second trip in the fall of 1928, Moscow concluded the 'Cordial Friendly and Commercial treaty' with the Imam in July, 1929. The tangible face of

[227] V. Lenin, cited in John Baldry's "Soviet Relations with Saudi Arabia and the Yemen 1917-1938", 54.

this treaty was the Russian Trading Company, which provided kerosene, flour, matches, and other necessities. [228]

Soviet attempts to draw closer to Yemen caught the attention of the Secretary of State for India in December of 1921. He cautioned that Lord Curzon had corresponded with the Soviet Government "protesting against their . . . tireless activities against the British Empire." [229] He also expressed his alarm that Enver Pasha was in Moscow, bragging about a Pan-Islamic revolutionary association he was organizing, which extended "from Morocco to China, including such countries as Java, The Yemen, Somaliland, besides Afghanistan, Egypt and India." [230] The establishment of the new Soviet state in 1917 as a result of the Bolshevik Revolution and the seeming desire of the Russians to export Marxism to "exploited" populations around the globe was definitely worrisome to the Foreign Office and the Resident at Aden. The treaty recognized the "the complete and absolute independence of the Government of the Yemen, and his majesty, the King Imam Yahya."[231] Yet, the attraction of communists to a man of faith seemed-at least upon initial contemplation, a poor partnership. But the ongoing border dispute between the Imam and the Aden Resident, and the failure to reach an agreement about the borders separating the two territories had gone nowhere.

Marxism, if not Bolshevism, would eventually dominate the south of Yemen. In November of 1967, the nation of South Yemen was formed out of Aden and what had been the Eastern Protectorate. By December of 1970 it became the People's Democratic Republic of South Yemen. The Yemeni Socialist Party became the only legally-recognized political party,

[228] CO 725/21/6 "Soviet Activities in the Yemen", No. 79311, 1930

[229] CAB 24/131, Secret Cabinet Memorandum by the Secretary of State for India, December, 1921.

[230] Ibid.

[231] CO 725/21/6 "Soviet Activities in the Yemen", No. 79311, 1930.

and relied heavily on Soviet support. Just as Russia before it, the Soviet Union was eager to establish naval stations in warm water ports, and was able to use Aden for this purpose. The British fear came to fruition, if not in the exact time-frame it had envisioned.

CHAPTER FIVE

THE POLICING OF JEWISH PERSECUTION

5.1 Background of Yemeni Jewry

The circumstances of Yemen's Jews worsened in the early twentieth century in a variety of ways, particularly in the 1920s, leading many rabbis to actively direct their communities to migrate to Aden, where they would petition for help from officials there. When little assistance was forthcoming from the Residency, the most talented and promising made their way to the Palestine mandate, where increasing numbers of Zionists were purchasing land and organizing collective farms. Other Jews used Aden as the embarkation point to pursue business interests in Ethiopia and Eritrea, where there existed economic relationships of long-standing. Those who were too poor, sickly or old remained in Aden, a financial and diplomatic burden to the Resident. Thus, like other leaders in Yemen, the rabbis who shepherded the Jewish enclaves also exercised agency beyond the control of the Panopticon, to do what they felt was in the best interests of their communities, thwarting British plans to keep expenses low and to refrain from involvement in internal Yemen affairs.

A Jewish presence in Yemen can be historically documented dating back to at least the second century of the Common Era. Jewish oral tradition of the region edges it back even further by another six hundred years, suggesting that the Jews established their first community in southwest Arabia in the half-century before the destruction of the First Temple.[232] A little more than a hundred years before Muhammad, the Himyarite Kingdom (380 C.E. to the mid-6th

[232] A. Neubauer, "The Literature of the Jews in Yemen", *The Jewish Quarterly Review*, 3, No. 4 (July 1891).

century) which recent scholarship indicates was very likely Jewish, dominated the land of Yemen. Archaeologists have confirmed its Jewish nature from its artifacts, which include inscriptions from stelae depicting mikvah baths and menorahs.[233] With the conquest by Christian Africans from Axum, Jews became a subjugated people in Yemen. The Jewish presence continued into the seventh century, when forces from the Hijaz conquered the entire Arabian Peninsula for the new faith of Islam. These Muslims acknowledged the monotheistic nature of Judaism, thus qualifying its adherents for *dhimmi* status.[234] As "People of the Book," members of the Jewish community assumed a recognized-although secondary-status in Islamic society, as long as they paid the required *jizya* tax.[235] A strong Jewish presence continued throughout the two Ottoman periods of occupation of the Yemen, 1535-1638 and 1872-1918. By the war's end, the Jews of Yemen numbered approximately 70,000.[236]

[233]The Himyarite Kingdom collapsed at the hands of Christian Ethiopians in the 6th century. See Glen W. Bowersock, *The Throne of Adulis: Red Sea Wars on the Eve of Islam* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013) There is some controversy regarding the nature of these Jews. Rather than seeing them as remnants of earlier migrations of Jews from the Levant, Bowersock contends that these were Arab converts to Judaism. For an earlier interpretation of this community in agreement with Bowersock, see "On the Historical Results of Eduard Glaser's Explorations in South Arabia," [early journal content on JSTOR] http://archive.org/stream/jstor-527425/527425_djvu.txt accessed on 26 January 2014.

[234] A person with *dhimmi* status is a non-Muslim who lives in a Muslim state, and has certain restrictions.

[235] The *jizya* was a tax assessed on all "People of the Book" in Islamic societies, a way of acknowledging that there was a cost for their protection within Dar Islam.

[236] A frequently-cited estimate for the size of the Jewish population in Yemen at the beginning of the 20th century is about .02% of the population, or as high as 60,000 to 80,000 out of a total population of 4 million. However, a concentration of Jews existed in the city of Sanaa, with some estimates stating that it made up to 20% of the city's population. See Eraqi-Klorman, "The Forced Conversion of Jewish Orphans in Yemen,", p. 23. Another possibility for differences in numbers is that the Jewish populations of Yemen and Aden may have been conflated. One Jewish visitor in February, 1926 said he was told by a Jew of Aden that their numbers were between 12,000-15,000. See Dr. Edwin N. Calisch, Jewish Telegraph Association, "Our Daily Newsletter", March 17, 1926. http://www.jta.org/1926/03/17/archive/our-daily-news-letter-64 accessed on 15 January 2014.

5.2 Changes of the Post-War Zaydi Regime

The end of the First World War in 1918 and the exodus of the Ottoman administration from Yemen ushered in changes for the Yemeni Jewish community and new problems for the British in southwest Arabia, justifying their further examination. The Imam Yahya had reclaimed the historical leadership of Yemen, despite the support the British lent to his rival, the Idris of Asir. After Ibn Saud absorbed the Idris' territory, the British and the Imam remained at an impasse over border disputes, which were addressed in a previous chapter. But Yahya had to consolidate his power as sole leader of Yemen, and the measures he undertook needed to be visible and popular among his constituency. An easy and predictable target for his attention were the Jews. The actions undertaken by the Imam need to be understood in light of this historical backdrop.

Another feature of the period which needs to be considered is the changing landscape of the legal system in Yemen. For centuries within the Ottoman Empire, Jews were able to live within the legal confines of their own separate confessional community, thereby avoiding sharia law and the Imam's oversight.[237] This practice was known as the millet system, and was one way the vast Ottoman Empire was able to hold its diverse communities together. During the nineteenth century, the growing sense of nationalism that was sweeping across Europe spread to the Middle East, and threatened to undermine Ottoman power, prompting changes that are collectively known as the *Tanzimat* reforms. One aspect of these reforms was a shift to secular law, known as the *qanun*, or *nizamiye* law. However, in recognition of the independence of Zaydi power in the mountainous north, these *nizamiye* tribunals were abolished by the 1880s in

[237] In general, within the millet system, Sharia law would not be applied to Jews or Christians as long as the legal dispute was between members of the single, confessional, non-Muslim community. However, if the offense also involved a Muslim, the case would be adjudicated within a Muslim Sharia court.

Yemen, in a trade-off with the Zaydi authorities, and were formalized in 1911 as part of the Treaty of Da'an.[238] Imam Yahya saw an opportunity to assert his religious and political authority by replacing this secular law with a Zaydi version of Sharia law. This process quickened once the war was over. For the most part, the immediate impact on the small Jewish population in Sanaa and surrounding tribal areas was minimal. They continued to practice their traditional occupations as silversmiths and merchants, with some even serving as unbiased keepers of financial records in tribal interactions. As before, there were restrictions placed upon Jews, such as forbidding the wearing of colored clothing and limiting the height of Jewish houses relative to those belonging to Muslims. Jews had to ride side-saddle on donkeys and had to dismount when approaching an Arab. While humiliating, these restrictions were not unique to Yemen. When issues arose they frequently were directed to the tribal *jar* (patron) for redress, who would remind the tribe that it was their religious obligation to protect the Jews in their community.

In 1919, Yahya implemented the Orphan's Decree, which was actually an old Zaydi law resurrected from the eighteenth century.[239] It was based on a hadith favored by Shias which stated " Every child is born with a disposition towards the natural religion. . .It is the parents who make it a Jew, a Christian or a Magian."[240] As the leader of the Zaydi community, Imam Yahya assumed the responsibility for seizing Jewish children whose parents had died and converting them to Islam. In the first half of the twentieth century, when drought, famine, and disease proliferated with high mortality rates among all populations, this happened with increasing

[238] Thomas Kuhn, "Shaping and Reshaping Colonial Ottomanism: Contesting Boundaries of Difference and Integration in Ottoman Yemen, 1872-1919. *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East* 27, no. 2 (2007): 317.

[239] Bat-Zion Eraqi-Klorman, "The Forced Conversion of Jewish Orphans in Yemen," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 33, no. 1 (2001), 23.

[240] Bukhari, http://elazhar.com/prophetstories/Chapter1-7.htm accessed on 10 November 2013.

frequency. Young Jewish children were often prematurely married off to avoid the forced adoptions and conversions. Orphaned children from small villages were the most susceptible to the forced adoptions, as they lived in close proximity to their Muslim neighbors and had difficulty hiding deaths in the community. At times, burials of parents were delayed until such time as these village children could be surreptitiously spirited to Sanaa, where they would be absorbed into the larger Jewish quarter there with little notice.[241] Adults were not entirely immune from the law. There is at least one egregious example of a Jewish male of mature age who was "adopted" and forced to convert, based on the fact that he had been orphaned as a child.

> An old man of sixty, clearly a scholar and a rabbi, was captured and brought to the ruler, son of the kumar where [witnesses] testified that his father had died when he was not yet a man. . .The governor said that he was to convert to Islam because that was the law of their religion. And he refused and offered himself up to die and asked that the governor cut off his head with a sword. This angered the governor and they took hold of him cruelly and in their zeal they mercilessly shaved his head in great anger. . .and they pried his mouth open with a pliers and broke his jaw in order to feed him unclean carrion.[242]

Historians debate just how frequent and coercive these efforts of adoption were, but there is no doubt that the law created genuine fear in the Jewish community, and acting on this fear of seizure of orphaned children, Jewish leaders spirited hundreds of youth into Aden to escape.[243]

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[241] The estimates of the Jewish population in Sanaa in the first part of the twentieth century is up to 20% of the city's population. See Bat-Zion Eraqi-Klorman, "The Forced Conversion of Jewish Orphans in Yemen," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 33, no. 1 (2001), 24.

[242] Avrahim 'Arusi, "A Letter to our Zionist Brethren," cited in Bat-Zion Eraqi-Klorman, "The Forced Conversion of Jewish Orphans in Yemen," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 33, no. 1 (2001), 26.

[243] Remarkably, the Imam Yahya is generally remembered by Jews in the expatriate Yemeni community in Israel "nostalgically" and "favorably." See Bat-Zion Eraqi-Klorman, "The Forced Conversion of Jewish Orphans in Yemen," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 33, no. 1 (2001), 43.

Yahya took other liberties with the Jews. In keeping with his status as a Sayyid and an Imam, he envisioned his responsibilities beyond the sphere of politics. He saw himself as the spiritual leader of all Yemenis, and to that end he sometimes undertook to resolve disputes of a religious nature in the Jewish community. For example, when in 1914 the sitting and former chief Rabbis of Sanaa engaged in a public dispute about the "authenticity" of kabbalistic traditions and the use of the Zohar, the Imam involved himself, ordering them both to his court, where after long debate he issued a *fatwa* in favor of the Zohar.[244] The Imam's interference in a distinctly religious matter was resented by many.

These events repelled and alienated many Jews, causing some to want to emigrate. At the same time there were also many factors which attracted Jews towards a homeland in Palestine. For centuries, Jews sitting at the Seder meal prayerfully uttered the words "Next year in Jerusalem" as a reminder of their history and their ultimate goal as a people.[245] The migration of Yemenite Jews to Palestine actually began in the 1880s, the way paved by Lord Rothschild's purchase of land in Palestine, and later by the World Zionist Organization's efforts to fuel the imagination of Jewish nationalists in the 1890s. By November of 1917, the British Foreign Secretary, Lord Balfour, issued his famous declaration that appeared to approve of a Jewish state in Palestine.

> I have much pleasure in conveying to you, on behalf of His Majesty's Government, the following declaration of sympathy with Jewish Zionist aspirations which has been submitted to, and approved by, the Cabinet. 'His Majesty's Government view with favour the establishment in Palestine of a

[244] Mark S. Wagner, "Jewish Mysticism on Trial in a Muslim Court: A Fatwa on the 'Zohar': Yemen 1914," *Die Welt des Islams* 47, no. 2 (2007): 211.

[245] *Shana Haba B'yerushalayim* in Hebrew.

> national home for the Jewish people, and will use their best endeavours to facilitate the achievement of this object, it being clearly understood that nothing shall be done which may prejudice the civil and religious rights of existing non-Jewish communities in Palestine, or the rights and political status enjoyed by Jews in any other country.'[246]

Added to this was the support U.S. President Wilson countenanced for national self-determination in his Fourteen Points. The result was that many Jews felt encouragement as they rallied around the Zionist cause. After the war, momentum in Yemen for emigration was increasing to such an extent that the Jewish Agency opened a bureau office in Aden in 1929 to process the volume of emigration requests.[247] During the period of the Mandate (1919-1948), the total number of Yemeni Jews who emigrated from Yemen to Palestine was 15, 837.[248] This number includes not only refugees from Yemen proper, but also from British Aden. According to Israeli scholar Aviva Halamish, Yemenite and Adeni Jews were disproportionately represented in Palestine. While the total number of Yemeni Jews who migrated to Palestine between 1932-1938 was small (approximately 7,000), this represented fourteen percent of Yemen's Jewish population.[249] This figure is especially impressive when compared to the percentage from Iraq (less than three percent) and Germany (less than seven percent.)[250]

The Jewish Distribution Board reported there were certainly more Yemeni Jews who wished to go to Palestine, but "this wave of immigration has slackened, on account of the

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[246] Arthur James Balfour, "Balfour Declaration", http://avalon.law.yale.edu/20th_century/balfour.asp, accessed 1 February 2014.

[247] Ari Ariel, *Jewish-Muslim Relations and Migration from Yemen to Palestine in the Late Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries* (Boston: Brill, 2014), 54.

[248] Moshe Sikron, Immigration to Israel from 1948 to 1953: Statistical Supplement (Jerusalem, 1957) 6, [Hebrew] cited in Aviva Halamish, "A New Look at Immigration of Jews from Yemen to Mandatory Palestine", *Israel Studies* 11 No. 1 (Spring 2006) p. 59.

[249] Aviva Halamish, "A New Look at Immigration of Jews," *Israel Studies* 11, no. 1(2006): 62.

[250] Ibid., 63.

prohibitory laws of I'lman Yihya [sic], and also on account of the difficulties in the way of Palestine immigration."[251] For those Yemeni Jews who made it to Palestine, the threat was not over. The Jewish Telegraphic Agency reported as late as 1934 that Yemen officials threatened their relatives, who would "be taken as hostages by the Yemen government in order to guarantee that the Jewish tourists will return to Yemen."[252]

5.3 The Quandary of Yemeni Jewish Refugees in Aden

Officials in Aden were in a precarious situation. On the one hand, it was Britain's own Foreign Minister who had tacitly sanctioned the Zionist goal of a Jewish homeland in Palestine. On the other hand, there were embittered Arabs who believed that the Sykes-Picot Agreement and the subsequent division of the Middle East into the League of Nations mandates was an outright betrayal of loyal Arabs who helped the Allies defeat the Ottoman Empire and win the war. They saw the Balfour Declaration as a betrayal of promised Arab autonomy, and Jewish immigrants were a constant reminder of this betrayal. There were other problems for the British, specific to Yemen. The migrants who ended up in Aden from Yemen frequently carried diseases and had no means to sustain themselves while waiting for a visa. It was up to the Aden government to maintain order and defend against pestilence, all at its own expense.

Arab Uprisings

The allegation of Yemeni persecution of Jews and the desire of these Jews to emigrate occurred at the precise moment that Arab riots were taking place in Palestine, for which Britain

[251] Jewish Distribution Board Newsletter, *Jewish Telegraphic Agency*, Jerusalem, March 10, 1929, accessed February 1, 2014. http://www.jta.org/1929/03/10/archive/j-d-b-news-letter-307.

[252] *Jewish Telegraphic Agency*, Jerusalem, December 27, 1934, accessed 1 February 2014, http://www.jta.org/1934/12/27/archive/yemen-to-take-jews-hostages#ixzz2s5AQwAfy.

served as the mandatory overseer. There had been riots in 1921 which resulted in the Churchill White Paper of 1922, and another riot in 1929, which led to the Passfield White Paper of 1930. These position and policy statements placed restrictions on Jewish immigration, culminating in yet the final White Paper of 1939, which capped immigration to no more than 75,000 Jews over five years. Against this backdrop, Yemen's Jews were disproportionately represented, competing for visas with legions of European Jews who were desperately fleeing rising persecution from fascist regimes throughout Europe.

The Arab uprisings against Jews were not restricted to Palestine, but also took place in Aden, while the refugees awaited their visas. One such riot was reported in May, 1932, when Yemeni Jews were accused of throwing excrement into the local mosque. The Young Men's Hebrew Association of Aden sent a telegram to the London's *Jewish Chronicle*, reporting "Jews in danger. Arab attack. Rush help."[253] Perhaps realizing the potential for future troubles, the India Office and Colonial Office wisely posited Major-General George Symes as the Aden Political Resident and General Officer in 1928. His previous experience as Chief Secretary to the Palestine Government singularly helped prepare him for the tension at Aden.

Disease & Expense

Jewish families would make their way to the port in Aden for the best chance to obtain transportation. Many would remain there, often to recover their health from debilitating diseases and to obtain the proper paper work for their journey. The situation in Aden was described as serious. "The poor Jews in the Yemen who are not deterred from emigrating by the threat of loss

[253] *Jewish Telegraphic Agency*, "Jews Wounded in Arab Attack in Aden." May 26, 1932, accessed January 24, 2014, http://www.jta.org/1932/05/26/archive/jews-wounded-in-arab-attack-in-aden-alleged-attempt-to-defile-mosque-as-excuse-for-attack-sixteen.

of their property congregate in Aden and presumably cannot get further due to lack of funds. They are of bad physique and tuberculosis is rife amongst them."[254] By the mid-1930s, the war between Ibn Saud and Imam Yahya had exacerbated the situation, leading Yahia Salem, the leader of the Yemenite Relief Committee of Aden, to send out an appeal to the American Jewish community. "Although we are aware of the conditions and the crisis prevailing in the world at large, nevertheless we must call your attention to your brethren in Yemen. We expect you, the Jews of America, who are known the world over as great philanthropists, to extend a helping hand."[255]

Aden officials were in a predicament: They did not have the resources nor did they have the desire to expend the time and effort in processing those who wished to emigrate. They also had no wish to further aggravate the riotous situation in Palestine. It seemed preferable to improve the lives of Jews in Yemen so they would be encouraged to remain. However, inserting imperial force in Yemen at this time would be to impose authority where both the India Office and the Foreign Office had claimed to have none. Since war's end, Yemen beyond the Protectorates was an area where the British had been struggling to bring about a peaceful resolution to the border dispute with the Imam. Making demands on behalf of the Jews would undermine the political and diplomatic stance Aden had established since 1918.

[254] CO 725/18/15 Memo sent to Colonial Office dated December 9, 1928 regarding the concerns of Wolff and Naamani.

[255] *Jewish Telegraphic Agency*, "War in Arabia Adds to Misery of Yemen Jews." July 31, 1934, accessed January 24, 2014. http://www.jta.org/1934/07/31/archive/war-in-arabia-adds-to-misery-of-yemen-jews#ixzz2s5EV2Tge.

Public Relations problems and the Americans

In December of 1928 a Foreign Office official by the name of Seymour received a visit from the English-Jewish journalist Lucian Wolff, who served on the Joint Foreign Committee of the Jewish Board of Deputies of the Anglo-Jewish Association. The purpose of his visit was two-fold: to inform the Foreign Office concerning allegations of the persecution of Jews in Yemen, and to alert officials to the American proposal for a fact-finding mission to Yemen to determine the truth of the allegations.[256] One of the biggest challenges the Foreign Office faced in southwest Arabia during this period was defending itself against the bipolar claims of expanding imperialism, while simultaneously being accused of not doing enough to interfere on behalf of the Jewish community. The insinuations from the Americans that the situation must be investigated must have been especially irritating. The United States was getting the credit for appearing to be the voice of self-determination as a result of Wilson's Fourteen Points at Paris and the defenders of the Jews. At the same time the United States Senate had failed to approve membership in the League of Nations. As a result of not having an imperial presence in the Middle East, the Americans did not incur the ill will of the Arabs for Palestine or the cost of upkeep for those homeless, sickly Jewish migrants who ended up in Aden. The situation takes on added irony when one considers that the United States' own immigration policies were reported to be growing worse.[257] Another member of the Anglo-Jewish Association in 1929, English

[256] CO 725/18/15 Memo sent to Colonial Office dated December 9, 1928 regarding the concerns of Wolff and Naamani.

[257] London, April 16, 1929, "World Leadership Passes to American Jewry, View at Anglo-Jewish Meeting", Jewish Telegraph Agency, http://www.jta.org/1929/04/16/archive/world-leadership-passes-to-american-jewry-view-at-anglo-jewish-meeting accessed on 24 January 2013.

philanthropist Leonard Montefiore stated "Forty years ago the persecuted Jewries [sic] turned to the English and French Jews. Now they turn to America."[258]

Nevertheless, the allegations that Wolff put forward at the meeting appeared to be unremarkable to the Foreign Office in that they described the common features of Jewish life in diaspora. According to the memorandum documenting the conversation, the alleged persecution "included the usual disability of Jews in most Moslem countries."[259] He produced various reports and newspaper articles documenting that foreign Hebrew teachers were forbidden to enter Yemen, Jewish schools were being closed, and Jewish emigration was being prevented.[260] To be clear, the paramount concern for Mr. Seymour and the Foreign Office was the very real belief that the Jews who were making their way to Aden, and hoping for exit visas were intending for Palestine to be their final destination, but the reality was that there was a limit on the number of visas to be distributed, and the poorest and neediest among the Jews were not likely to be granted them. After discussing these peripheral issues with the Colonial Office, it was agreed that Seymour would call Wolff and remind him that a treaty with the Imam was not yet a reality, and in any case, he should be contacting the India Office instead of the Foreign Office. Hesitant to use pressure with regard to the Imam and the Arabs of Palestine, the British passed the responsibility from the Foreign Office to the Colonial Office, and finally to the India Office.

The decision to respond by telephone rather than written communication suggests urgency, but also the wish to have a lack of transparency by avoiding communication in written form. Clearly, the Aden government did not want to increase Jewish immigration to Palestine.

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[258] Ibid.

[259] CO 725/18/15 Memo sent to Colonial Office dated December 9, 1928 regarding the concerns of Wolff and Naamani.

[260] Ibid.

The inquiry by Wolff and the Americans could not have occurred at a more inconvenient time, as far as the British were concerned. Disagreements between Palestinian Arabs and Jewish immigrants about praying at the Western Wall in 1928 had just taken place, and within eight months would culminate in violent riots in Jerusalem, Hebron, and Safed (August, 1929). The resulting commission of inquiry that was organized would issue the Hope-Simpson Report, which wanted to halt virtually all Jewish immigration to Palestine on the grounds that it did not contain sufficient agricultural land to support more people. It specifically cited refugees from Yemen as an example of Palestine's failed immigration policy, stating that Jews were arriving with illegal visas in hand. After listing the nine categories of permissible immigrants (those with requisite money, employment, or relatives to vouch for them), the report states "It would appear that the practice is growing up in Aden . . .of attaching wives and families to persons entitled to immigration certificates so that by this means the passport control of this Government may be evaded." [261]

By April of 1930, Wolf issued a formal report, wherein he claimed that there were three hundred Yemenite refugee families and some two hundred and fifty orphans in ports waiting to embark for Palestine. While most were in Mediterranean ports, Wolf warned that eighty families alone were in Aden, "in the utmost misery."[262] Eventually, the situation forced Aden authorities to temporarily halt the influx of Jewish Yemenis.

> [They] have gone mad in their migration to Palestine via Aden. Without contemplation or prearrangement, they would simply abandon their native place

[261] The Hope-Simpson Report, October, 1930, p. 120-124. Jewish Virtual Library, http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/History/hope.html accessed on 1 February 2014.

[262] *Jewish Telegraph Agency*, "Yemenite Jews' Condition Made Worse by Palestine Troubles.", April 29, 1930, accessed on January 24, 2013. http://www.jta.org/1930/04/29/archive/yemenite-jews-condition-made-worse-by-palestine-troubles.

> and throw their whole weight about paying least consideration to their provision or equipment. Such things, said the Medical Officer of Health in my hearing, are a nuisance to the public and obnoxious from the sanitary point of view.[263]

As a result of this inquiry, Wolff identified three possible sources of blame for Jewish problems, the first being the Imam Yahya, who allegedly threatened to confiscate the property of the wealthiest Jews if they fled Yemen. This meant that the poorest and least desirable of the Jews were the ones trying to emigrate to Palestine. When they could not obtain visas, they were left for Aden to support. In contrast to this, Aden official Colonel Jacob contended that blaming the Imam was unfair. "The Jews are certainly not mal-treated by the Ruler, nor by Arabs. . .in certain parts the Jews enjoy special privileges."[264] Instead, Jacob blamed the rich Yemenite Jews, stating that they should bear the burden of responsibility for refusing to help their co-religionists.

Finally, Wolff identified the British government as the real reason why the Jews could not safely emigrate, although he believed the problem was not as dire as first thought. "Our American friends have got it into their heads that the Yemen is a British Protectorate, and that Downing Street is responsible for any misgovernment of which the Imam may be guilty."[265]

> The British government has no representative in Yemen, and its relations with the Imam are rendered difficult by the frontier question. . .In these circumstances it would be very difficult and no doubt quite useless for the British Government to take up the cause of the Jews officially at San'a. It might even aggravate their sufferings. [266]

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[263] *Jewish Telegraph Agency,* "Digest of World Press Opinion", November 5, 1934, accessed on December 17, 2013. http://www.jta.org/1934/11/05/archive/digest-of-world-press-opinion-6.

[264] CO/725/18/15, "Jews in the Yemen", Joint Foreign Committee Report of the Secretary, "The Jews of Yemen, Present Situation," January 23, 1929.

[265] CO/725/18/15, "Jews in the Yemen", Letter dated January 23, 1929 from Lucien Wolff to Horace Seymour, Esq. of the Foreign Office.

[266] Ibid.

The problem had come full circle. The Jews were being persecuted, thus leading to their emigration to Palestine, where their presence stirred up revolts among the Arabs living there under British authority. The answer would be to stop the persecution of Jews in Yemen in order to stop the flow of refugees, but this was impossible because the British had no power or authority in Yemen because they had determined at the end of the war not to support the Imam and to win the border dispute at all costs, including diplomatic relations with Yemen.

CHAPTER SIX

EPILOGUE AND CONCLUSION

6.1 The Treaty of 1934

After years of accumulated ill will between the Aden Residency and the Imamate of Sana'a, a treaty was concluded in February of 1934, which recognized the borders established per the Anglo-Ottoman line of 1904. In other words, Imam Yahya had not won back any of the territory that the Ottomans had negotiated away to the British, and for which he had been fighting since 1918. His reasons for signing the treaty were simple. He was facing a territorial war in the north with Saudi Arabia, a nation with whom the British had signed two treaties of friendship.[267] Yahya recognized that fighting a two-front war would limit his chances of success, and getting the British for the first time to officially acknowledge him as Yemen's ruler would place him on an equal diplomatic footing with his enemy, Ibn Saud. When the armed conflict with Ibn Saud started three months later, the Italians intervened on behalf of the Imam. In a Cabinet meeting held on May 9th, 1934, the Foreign Secretary, The Secretary of State for the Colonies, and the Secretary of State for India briefly entertained the implications of British involvement, and then rejected the notion. "If Ibn Saud should capture Sanaa and get possession of the Yemen we should have to tell him that he must carry on the . . .Treaty we. . .just concluded with the Imam."[268] The war ended with the signing of a treaty on June 14, 1934. Although it did not result in the loss of San'a, it was seen as a victory for Saudi Arabia, as

[267] This is a reference to the Darin Pact, signed in December of 1915 between the British and Nejad and the Treaty of Jeddah, signed in May of 1927 with the Kingdom of Hejaz and Nejd. One must keep in mind that while Ibn Saud was party to both treaties with the British, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia is not created until 1932.

[268] CAB 23/79 Cabinet Meeting of May 9, 1934.

Yemen did lose three territories in the northwest (Jizan, Asir, and Najran) which were adjacent to the Red Sea.

Thus, the Treaty of Sana'a of 1934 accomplished the narrow goal of recognizing the legitimacy of a border drawn by the Ottoman and British Empires. It provided no promises of mutual military defense, as Aden provided to the Protectorates, nor any other form of governmentality. The panopticon succeeded in forcing the Imam of Yemen to agree to the borders, but little else. Other problems in Yemen for which the British had not been willing to accept overt responsibility remain to the present unresolved. For instance, the disputed border later served to divide Yemen into the People's Democratic Republic of Yemen (PDRY) in the south and the Yemen Arab Republic (YAR) in the north after the British retreated from Aden in 1967. The PDR morphed into a Soviet client state, but weakened considerably in the waning days of the USSR, and by 1990, it merged with the Yemen Republic to create the Arab Yemen Republic. Despite a 1994 civil war to overturn the unification, Yemen is still a single nation-state, albeit with pockets of warring factions in the south. Since the Arab Spring forced the resignation of President Saleh from office, the old dispute between north and south has resurfaced. Saleh's successor, Abdrabuh Mansour Hadi, has sought some sort of rapprochement with *Hirak*, the southern secessionist organization. Still, this same artificial division continues to be a source of conflict. On February 10, 2014, a post-Arab Spring presidential committee decided to change Yemen into a federation of six regions: Aden and Hadramaut in the south, and Saba, Janad, Tihama and Azal in the north.[269] The Houthis (Zaydis) who live in the Azal region are upset because they lack viable natural resources and access to the sea, while the socialists in the south are still upset because they will be outnumbered two to four in any kind of federal vote.

[269] "Yemen to become six-region federation," *Aljazeera*, 10 February 2014, accessed 15 February 2014 http://www.aljazeera.com/news/middleeast/2014/02/yemen-become-six-region-federation-2014210124731726931.html.

The former threat of Bolshevik Revolutionaries no longer exists, although a twenty-first century resurgent Marxism still threatens.

6.2 21st Century Déjà Vu

To a great degree, understanding the sources of political power in the first half of the 20th century in Yemen can serve as a basis for understanding the myriad of problems there today. From different vantage points relative to the panopticon, all sides made historical claims to power. In the name of history, a succession of Aden Residents defended their border with Yemen based on past treaties signed with the Sultan of Lahej as well as with the Ottoman Empire. Likewise, history was the basis for Yemenis to reach back before the Ottoman and British occupations, to a time period predating the first East India Company ship, when coffee, qat, resins, aromatics and spices shipped from the ports of Arabia Felix, integrating Yemen forever with the cultures and economies along both the Red Sea and the Indian Ocean.

Religion is another basis for claims of power in Yemen. Both the Idris of Asir and the Imam Yahya actively exercised claims to political power based on their families' religious preeminence among their followers, separate and distinct from appeals to tribal loyalty. The Sufi traditions which bestowed religious respect and authority upon the Idris's ancestor on both sides of the Red Sea likewise transmitted authority to successive generations. As for the Zaydi Imam, he parlayed his nine-hundred year old Zaydi religious heritage in Yemen as the basis for opposing the British incursion into what was Imamite territory, to win back the support he lost from his own people when he agreed to Ottoman subjugation per the Treaty of Da'an. As for the British, they framed their imperial view-what is referred to today as "Western exceptionalism"-

centered upon a belief in the superiority of Christianity and its paternalistic mission of advancement and progress.

A final basis of claim to power was *realpolitik*. The Imam was a first-rate politician. He knew how to exercise agency by negotiating a path to the Ottoman and British bases of power to achieve personal and national goals. He took advantage of the technology of his day, whether it was the Cairo press or the wireless relay station at Hodeida to disseminate his propaganda. When he was not able to persuade tribal leaders to support him, he would wield his religious authority over them. When that did not work, he would arrange to buy them off. By 1934, he worked out settlements with Ibn Saud and Aden, and his successors remained in power until 1962. As for the Government of India officials who viewed Yemen from the vantage point of the panopticon at Aden, the situation was not as simple as they had imagined it would be in 1918, and certainly not as cost-efficient as they had hoped. *Realpolitik* for them dictated continuous financial payoffs in exchange for questionable loyalty among their Hinterland partners. It called for them to overlook the slave traffic which they could not afford to police, even as its presence challenged their moral sensitivities. *Realpolitik* meant that they would have to maintain air bases and utilize them to drop bombs, resulting in bloodshed among the Yemenis, criticism at home, and interference where they claimed to desire none.

The first chapter of this dissertation delineated the three most problematic issues facing Britain in Yemen in the post war period as articulated by the Foreign Office. These included border disputes between Yemen and its southern border with Aden and its Hinterlands. A second problem was the conflict to the north in Zaydi territory along the border with Asir and access to the Red Sea ports. Lastly, there was the continual Italian encroachment in Yemen from her colonial holdings in northeast Africa. In addition to this formal list, this research has

highlighted other unanticipated problems at the time, including the excessive number of armaments and foreign soldiers emanating from "ungoverned spaces," the presence of potentially volatile, non-orthodox forms of Islam, large numbers of poor and exploited African immigrants, the persecution of Yemeni Jews and their migration to Palestine, financial extortion by native leaders, and the failed attempts by Western hegemonic forces to manage these problems effectively from the air. The continuing relevancy of these issues in the post-Arab Spring in Yemen warrants a brief examination of the current situation.

In the north of the country, historic irredentist claims have resurfaced. Vestiges of the Zaydi dispute with Asir continues, even though Asir is now part of Saudi Arabia. Shia nationalism in the form of a violent Houthi insurgency along the Saudi border, threatens to pit arguably the most significant Sunni power (Saudi Arabia) against the strongest Shia power, Iran.[270] As the alleged proxy, the Houthis pose a danger to not only the Saudis, by threatening rebellion among the Saudi Shia minority in Najran, but to the Sanaa regime as well.[271] Strangely, the Saudi kingdom supported the Imamate back in 1962, as it believed it shared with the Imamate the desire to continue a monarchical form of government at a time when secular nationalist military officers were seizing control in other parts of the Middle East (Egypt, Syria, and Iraq). More recently, the Arab Spring witnessed Saudi support of President Saleh and later, President Hadi, if only to help them fight the Zaydi Houthis. The Saudis have instituted a blockade of ports (reminiscent of the British blockade during the Great War). The blockade is not merely for propaganda purposes, but resulting from a real fear of weapons proliferation.

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[270] The Houthis are Zaydi Shias, named for Hussein Badr al-Din al-Houthi, who was killed in a confrontation with government forces in 2004. The Houthi movement's goal is to re-establish the Zaydi Imamate. The government has cracked down on the Houthi religious schools in the recent past, angering the Houthis. This, despite the fact that former President Saleh is himself a Zaydi. In contrast, the current President Hadi is a Sunni from the South.

[271] "Houthis Expand to Jawf; Government Desperate for Victory." *The Yemen Post*, April 10, 2010. Accessed December 9, 2013. http://yemenpost.net/Detail123456789.aspx?ID=3&SubID=1629.

Recent discoveries of antiaircraft missiles (similar in style to American-made Stinger missiles) of unknown origin found in dhows off the Yemen coast have triggered worries about escalation of the arms trade across the Red Sea.[272]

The insurgency in the south and the Houthi rebellion in the north have created a power vacuum into which another historical problem has emerged: the presence of foreign soldiers emanating from 'ungoverned spaces' combining with the presence of potentially volatile, non-orthodox forms of Islam**.** In the post-World War I period many former Ottoman militiamen believed they had no future to which to return once the Ottoman Empire was replaced by the new Republic of Turkey. Those who stayed often continued in military, political, and commercial advisory roles to the Imam. These professional soldiers from a Sunni Islamic background served to buttress the Zaydi Shia leadership of the Imam. In fact, a different sort of foreign army has taken hold in the Yemen of the twenty first century. In 2009, the Saudi and Yemeni branches of al-Qaeda merged to create al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP).At the present time AQAP has infiltrated Yemen and is using it as a staging ground for the training of Islamist radicals for conflicts as far away as Chechnya and Afghanistan. Like the earlier foreign soldiers, these members of AQAP are of Sunni extraction, but their motivation is very different from their Turkish predecessors. Similar to the Imam Yahya, who worked in conjunction with the remnants of Ottoman authority while demanding money and support from the British, former President Saleh took money from the United States to ostensibly combat terrorism, while at the same time allowing himself to be used by the radical elements to maintain his position. Some even believe that Saleh was behind the prison break in 2006 which freed twenty-three al-Qaeda members on

[272] C.J. Chivers and Robert F. Worth, "Seizure of Antiaircraft Missiles in Yemen Raises Fears that Iran is Arming Rebels There." *The New York Times*, February 8, 2013. Accessed on March 10, 2014 http://www.nytimes.com/2013/02/09/world/middleeast/weapons-seizure-in-yemen-raises-worries-of-irans-influence.html?_r=0.

the eve of their trial for the attack on the *USS Cole*.[273] An award-winning journalist from Yemen stated "Ali Abdullah Saleh gave Al-Qaeda land, money and weapons. He held meetings with them even inside his presidential palace!"[274] With Saleh's resignation in November of 2011, The United States continues to try to vet its partners on the ground to thwart terrorist activity and to stabilize Yemen, much like the British nearly a century ago.

Another link to the past is the failed attempt by Western hegemonic forces to manage these multiple problems effectively from the air. Indeed, the bombings carried out by the Royal Air Force in the inter-war period eerily presaged the American drone program of the 21st century, and is equally unpopular in Yemen. In the earlier period, the British public was lulled into thinking that such targeted bombing would not alienate the "good" tribesmen." British Commodore Portal commended the use of bombing in Yemen "wherever it is feasible, because it is impersonal as compared with an Army expedition, and results in no ill will on the part of the tribes."[275] The United States' "War on Terror" in Yemen has resulted in eighty seven drone strikes between 2002-2014, resulting in five hundred deaths.[276] The artificial divide that the Bush and Obama administrations have made between combatants and civilians in the Yemen drone attacks does not hold up under international law. Because the United States does not have a declaration of war against Yemen, all victims of drones are legally considered civilians,

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[273] Bill Roggio, "al-Qaeda Jailbreak in Yemen", *The Long War Journal*, February 8, 2006. Accessed on January 7, 2014. http://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2006/02/alqaeda_jailbreak_in.php.

[274] Sophie Claudet, "Yemeni Nobel Winner to the World: Stop Helping Saleh." Al-Monitor, June 4, 2012, accessed on March 5, 2014. http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2012/al-monitor/interview-with-tawakul-karman.html##ixzz2vagwk9i3.

[275] Robert R. Robbins. "The Legal Status of Aden Colony and the Aden Protectorate." *The American Journal of International Law* 33, no. 4 (1939): 710.

[276] Bill Rogio and Bob Barry. "Charting the Data for US Airstrikes in Yemen, 2002-2014". Accessed March 1, 2014. *The Long War Journal*, http://www.longwarjournal.org/multimedia/Yemen/code/Yemen-strike.php.

according to Notre Dame professor, Mary Ellen O'Connell.[277] As a professor of international law, and chair of a 2003 United Nations board of inquiry, Professor O'Connell states that drone deaths cannot be called war crimes, "because the situations are not war. . .Rather. . . drone killings in [Yemen are]. . . widespread, persistent violations of the human right to life."[278]

The response on the ground mirrors the earlier reaction to airstrikes. Human Rights Watch stated "The strikes, often using armed drones, are creating a public backlash that undermines US efforts against. . . AQAP."[279] Yet, the U.S.- just like Great Britain before it- defends the use of air power as a cost-saving measure. John Brennan, counterterrorism advisor and current CIA Director, stated " [The] use of armed drones to strike at suspected militants in places like Pakistan and Yemen has grown dramatically under the Obama administration, and the emergence of the new technology — which has sharply reduced the cost and risk of warfare to its operators, making it easier to engage in sporadic combat in far-flung regions."[280]

Large numbers of poor and exploited Africans crossed the Red Sea as slaves in the first half of the twentieth century. As was discussed in chapter four, many of these exploited workers were from Ethiopia or Somaliland, who were being transported by slave-runners who were paid high fees by wealthy Arabs. Today, as they did a century ago, Africans migrate across from Tadjura and Obock in Djibouti near the Bab al-Mandeb, fleeing war and poverty. They cross

[277] Rahut Radhakrishan, "Drone Dialogue: Flying in Circles?" November 15, 2013, *Aljazeera*. Accessed December 1, 2013, http://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/features/2013/11/drone-dialogue-flying-circles-201311121616157577126.html.

[278] Ibid.

[279] Human Rights Watch, "US: Reassess Targeted Killings in Yemen." October 22, 2013. Accessed January 30, 2014. http://www.hrw.org/news/2013/10/21/us-reassess-targeted-killings-yemen.

[280] Charlie Savage, "Top US Security Official Says 'Rigorous Standards' are Used for Drone Strikes." The New York Times, April 30, 2012. Accessed December 15, 2013. http://www.nytimes.com/2012/05/01/world/obamas-counterterrorism-aide-defends-drone-strikes.html.

there because it is still the shortest route to Yemen. According to a 2012 report by the Danish Refugee Council, "the capacity of the coast guards to patrol the Yemen coast effectively is in practice very limited. Since the beginning of the instability in Yemen in early 2011, there has been little. . .official security presence at the coast."[281] Due to the illegal and risky nature of much of the Red Sea crossing, firm numbers of migrants are difficult to determine. Additionally, it is suspected that at least some of the migrants die en route, perhaps tossed into the sea during rough weather by fellow migrants, who are then reluctant to discuss their actions later with monitoring organizations.[282]Although they seek jobs in the qat fields of Yemen, or the oil fields of the Gulf, many do not achieve their dream and are ultimately destined for some sort of unfree labor as illegal domestic workers, and even as slaves.

Officially outlawed, slavery is still documented in the region. In 2012, the Yemeni NGO, the Wethaq Foundation for Civil Orientation, verified at least one hundred ninety cases of slavery in three provinces in the north of Yemen.[283] Those who cannot cross the border into Saudi Arabia or Oman stay in Yemen because of lack of resources to return home. Those who do not obtain employment or passage out of the country oftentimes end up in refugee camps.. According to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), 107,500 African refugees arrived in Yemen in 2012, 84,000 of whom were Ethiopian nationals.[284] Unlike

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[281] Danish Refugee Council (Regional Office for the Horn of Africa and Yemen), *Desperate Choices: Conditions, Risks and Protection Failures Affecting Ethiopian Migrants in Yemen*, October 2012, accessed 10 March 2014, http://www.drc.dk/fileadmin/uploads/pdf/IA_PDF/Horn_of_Africa_and_Yemen/RMMSbooklet.pdf. p.36.

[282] Ibid.

[283] Radio Netherlands Worldwide, "Yemen's Hidden Slaves" December 19, 2012. Accessed on November 11, 2013. http://www.rnw.nl/english/article/yemen%E2%80%99s-hidden-slaves.

[284] UN News Centre, "Record Number of Africans Crossed Gulf of Aden in 2012", January 15, 2013, http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp/www.unodc.org/story.asp?NewsID=43928&Cr=yemen&Cr1=refugee#.Ux3DDe7D_IU accessed January 2, 2014. While the majority of the migrants were Ethiopian, the rest were from Somalia.

Somalian refugees who are recognized as political refugees and thus qualify for asylum, Ethiopians frequently are not. "[f]or the vast majority of Ethiopian migrants protection space is nearly non-existent and they are often extremely vulnerable."[285] Many African migrants try unsuccessfully to cross into Saudi Arabia at the border town of Haradh. There they have to compete for resources with internally-displaced persons who are fleeing from Houthi rebels in the north or al-Qaeda-occupied areas in Abyan province in the south.[286] For some of those who are not successful in entering Saudi Arabia or securing a spot in a refugee camp, the future is dim. According to Doctors Without Borders, many end up in one of two hundred torture camps which exist along the Yemeni-Saudi border.[287]

Even for those Africans who have been in Yemen for generations, racism still continues to bar them from full acceptance into society, which means the lack of full job opportunities. Discrimination against darker skinned populations who live in clusters along the Red Sea coast exists still, even as it did during Britain's colonial adventure there. Called *al-Akhdam*, they presumably have origins in Africa, even if that link goes back more than a hundred years. Intermarriage is not allowed, and many of the estimated 1.5 million population work in servile positions such as trash collection. The 2011 Yemen revolt raised hopes that life would improve, but that improvement has not materialized.[288]

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[285] Ibid.

[286] *UNHCR Refugees Daily*, February 9, 2013, accessed on February 4, 2014, http://www.unhcr.org/cgi-bin/texis/vtx/refdaily?pass=463ef21123&id=52242dfa5.

[287] BBC, "Ethiopian Migrants Tell of Torture and Rape in Yemen." July 18, 2013. Accessed March 10, 2014. http://www.bbc.com/news/world-23321638.

[288] Jomana Farhat, "The Untouchables of Yemen", *Alakhbar*, December 5, 2012. Accessed March 10, 2014. http://english.al-akhbar.com/node/14260. Another term that is also used to refer to the *al-Akhdam* is المهمشين, "the marginalized ones."

With regard to other historical migrant populations, the Jews of Yemen have all but disappeared at this point (2014). While chapter five documented the historical persecution of Jews in the interwar period, some follow-up is necessary to put this in perspective. By February of 1948 Imam Yahya was assassinated, and replaced by his son Ahmad. Just a few months later Israel unilaterally declared its existence as a state, initiating the first of the wars with her Arab neighbors. According to the Israeli Ministry of Aliyah and Immigrant Absorption, between 1949-1950 nearly 50,000 Jews of Yemen and Aden immigrated to the new state of Israel during Operation Magic Carpet (On Eagles' Wings).[289] For those Jews who chose to remain, rumors of persecution continued to persist. As recently as 1992, human rights groups were still documenting the forced conversion of orphaned Jewish children.[290] Today it is estimated that there are fewer than two hundred Jews still residing in the country, most of them in Sanaa, living under the protection of the President.[291] The preoccupation by the entire Arab world (including Yemen) with the Palestinians' displacement by the state of Israel continues to influence diplomatic relations today. While Israel is the home of 140,000 Yemeni Jews, Yemen currently maintains no diplomatic ties to the Jewish state of Israel. The news organ for the ruling party, the General People's Congress, regularly covers anti-Zionist protests, such as a recent gathering of five thousand Yemenis who met to "express their solidarity with the Palestinian people."[292] Furthermore, perhaps because of the friendship between the United States and Israel, Yemen

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[289] Israeli Ministry of Ailyah and Immigrant Absorption.

[290] Jewish Telegraphic Agency, "Jewish Orphan in Yemen Kills Herself." January 15, 1992. Accessed on November 12, 2014. http://www.jta.org/1992/01/15/archive/jewish-orphan-in-yemen-kills-herself.

[291] Yemen Online, accessed February 16, 2014. http://www.yemenonline.info/news-3879.html.

[292] "Yemeni Jews Participate in Demonstrations Against the Zionist Aggression on Gaza," 13 January 2009, http://www.almotamar.net/en/5751.htm. Accessed July 10, 2012.

chose to support Iraq during the invasion of Kuwait, resulting in the expulsion of her citizens from their jobs in Saudi Arabia.

6.3 The Relevance of 'Ungoverned Spaces' in Yemen

Since the recent wave of volatility swept across the Arab world, it has become a cliché for scholars to discuss "ungoverned spaces," as if people living in tribal areas and areas noted for ethnic or religious minorities have no governance. Within religious communities, as within tribes, there are hierarchies of power. The officials at Aden eventually came to understand this. Whether the focus is on Shia Imams, Sufi shaykhs, or the provincial ulema, power in Yemen was and is shaped in part by religious identity, and these religious identities often cross tribal affiliations. Former President Saleh grasped this concept, and made the eighteenth-century religious scholar Muhammad al-Shawkani a hero by promoting the Sunni-influenced form of Zaydism that he inspired.[293] This included measures to make the office of President hereditary. This is not surprising, and it was not the first time that a Yemeni autocratic leader tried to undermine the revolutionary nature of Zaydi teaching, which supported a dynamic style of leadership transition. During the 18th century the Zaydi Imams of the Qasimi dynasty of Yemen envied the Sunni notion of inherited leadership, something that promised to cement their powerful positions. This teaching distinguished the revolutionary Zaydis from the "quietist" Twelver Shias and from the Sunnis themselves whose title of caliph in other parts of the Islamic world was passed down through family members. Before the Arab Spring arrived in Sanaa, it

[293] Bernard Haykel, *Revival and Reform in Islam: the Legacy of Muhammad al-Shawkani* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003). Chapter four includes an especially relevant discussion of the "Sunnisation of Zaydism" and how the nature of Zaydi governance transformed from a charismatic (revolutionary) leadership to one of a dynastic bureaucracy.

was widely believed that President Saleh was planning on passing the office of the presidency to his son,[294] By February, 2011, the revolutionaries in the streets had made it clear that this was not acceptable. In a last bid to stay in office, Saleh responded: "I present these concessions in the interests of the country. The interests of the country come before our personal interests. . .No extension, no inheritance, no resetting the clock." [295] This is significant with a glance to history, because the British had tried to use religion in Yemen to divide the people at a time when the reformers were more successful in bringing the divergent groups together.

The term "ungoverned spaces" gained prominence in national security circles in 2006 with the publication of Ty Groh's master's thesis by that same title, in which he discussed the role of tribes in Pashtun areas of Pakistan and Afghanistan.[296] Groh emphasized that in tribal areas the state failed to control the tribes by either misunderstanding or ignoring significant structural factors. Further, he advocated for states to recognize the difference between "establishing order and establishing authority."[297] Groh contends that a state which has a low capacity to expand its authority will be forced to be more accommodating in its policies as a state.[298] Since that time other scholars have applied the thesis to additional areas, such as Yemen. In a report edited by Gabriel Khoeler-Derrick for West Point's Combatting Terrorism Center entitled *A False Foundation: AQAP, Tribes and Ungoverned Spaces in Yemen*, the author makes

[294] This was an accusation that was also leveled against former Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak about his son.

[295] Saleh's address to parliament (shura) on 2 February 2011. "Yemen President Said Won't Extend Term or Pass to Son," *Express Tribune*, Accessed on 17 January 2013 http://tribune.com.pk/story/112965/yemen-president-says-wont-extend-term-or-pass-to-son/.

[296] "Ungoverned Spaces: The Challenges os. f Governing Tribal Societies" by Ty L. Groh, June 2006, Naval Postgraduate School. 151 pages. Groh, a U.S. Air Force officer wrote this as his master's thesis at the Naval Postgraduate School in Monterey, California.

[297] Ibid., 8.

[298] Ibid.

the case that with regard to AQAP, " there is ample evidence to suggest that, contrary to popular opinion, the group's strength and durability does not stem from Yemen's tribes."[299]

If AQAP's strength does not stem from the tribes, perhaps it comes from uniting people with religious rhetoric. The presence of over eighty Guantanamo prisoners of Yemeni descent – the largest single national group represented at the prison- demonstrates this.[300] Michele Flournoy, former U.S. Undersecretary of Defense for Policy, outlined five security issues that the West now faced in the Middle East. A summarization of her list follows, reading like a memo from the desk of the Aden Resident in 1920.

a. Violent extremism
b. Proliferation of weapons
c. Shifts in global balance
d. Threats from state weakness and failure
e. Rising tensions in the "global commons"[301]

Flournoy faults new modes of communication and transportation in spreading Al-Qaeda's ideology within Yemen. Links between religious extremism and technology are not new. The Asiri Sufis, the Saudi Wahhabis, and the Shia Zaydis were considered extremists by various British observers one hundred years ago. The use of telegrams and the printing press are examples of how technology in the past was used to propagate Pan-Islamism and Pan-Arabism

[299] Gabriel Khoeler-Derrick for West Point's Combatting Terrorism Center entitled *A False Foundation*: AQAP, Tribes and Ungoverned Spaces in Yemen

[300] Frank Gardner, "Yearning for Yemen: the Difficulties of Returning Yemenis from Guantanamo Bay," BBC World News, January 10, 2014. Accessed March 1, 2014 http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-25687505.

[301] Michele Flournoy, Center for Strategic and International Studies, Rebalancing the Force: Major Issues for QDR 2010. April 29, 2009, found at http://csis.org/files/media/csis/events/090501_flournoy.pdf, accessed July 28, 2013.

across the Peninsula. Imam Yahya produced pamphlets that he had dropped from airplanes in hostile territory. Newspapers in Cairo printed anti-British articles submitted by correspondents in Hodeidah and Aden, and news of Zionist immigration to Palestine instigated anti-Jewish riots in Sana'a and Aden.

To what extent has it furthered Western interests to tell Yemen that the West does not want to become involved in internal matters, while engaging in practices which would indicate the opposite? The foreign aid packages that the United States awarded to Presidents Saleh and Hadi are the equivalent of the stipends paid by the British to the Idris and the Protectorate Shaykhs to purchase their loyalty. Did these stipends then or now do anything of lasting significance to alleviate the chaos and instability of life in Yemen or to further the agenda of the relevant Western hegemon? Is the world safer because of them?

Not much has changed. Like the inter-war period, there are still sizeable populations of people from Africa migrating to the Yemeni coastline. Officially, slavery no longer exists along the Red Sea, yet there are still large numbers of people emigrating from the Horn of Africa, destined for the eastern half of the Red Sea littoral under cover of night. These Somali refugees are resented by many Yemenis, as they threaten the jobs and fragile economy and bring epidemics of typhoid and cholera to the shores of Arabia. Other migrants have experienced more radical and politicized versions of their religion in their homeland, such as the militant al-Shabab militia in Somalia. Pirates still ply the waters of the Bab al-Mandeb, the role of the arms traders echo the instability of nearly a century ago, and the West still claims it does not want to get involved.

The final assessment of British imperial policy in Yemen between 1918-1934 is mixed. During a time when the notion of empire was beginning to wane, and the nation needed money to recover from the costs of the Great War, both in human and economic terms, it seemed reasonable enough to avoid imperial occupation and limit official expansion on the Arabian Peninsula. One mistake that the India Office, Foreign Office, and Colonial Office made was to accept the belief that since Yemen had little in the way of natural resources to exploit, their strategic interests lay only in the narrow strip of coastal land in western Yemen. As this dissertation has explored, the Red Sea did not serve as a barrier, but rather as a facilitator of the magnification and diffusion of the many problems emanating from the interior of Yemen to other flash points in the empire, such as the Levant, Africa, and India. It was not apparent until it was too late that monitoring the situation entirely from the panopticon at Aden was a failing proposition. Further, the use of airpower to target enemies was not a technological panacea, and did not prevent tremendous collateral damage, resulting in perpetual ill-will among the Yemeni population. Current Western policymakers might find it instructive to consider the implications of employing such a strategy among poor, desperate populations. These "ungoverned spaces" (or perhaps, 'differently governed' spaces) cannot be entirely managed from a distance, even with twenty-first century drone technology launched from the new panopticon of Camp Lemonnier, Djibouti.[302] As the British found out ninety years ago, there are opportunity costs incurred by expecting the benefits of empire without assuming the responsibility for it.

[302] Craig Whitlock and Greg Miller, "U.S. Moves Drone Fleet from Camp Lemonnier to Ease Djibouti's Safety Concerns," *The Washington Post*, 24 September 2013, accessed 1 December 2013. http://www.washingtonpost.com/world/national-security/drone-safety-concerns-force-us-to-move-large-fleet-from-camp-lemonnier-in-djibouti/2013/09/24/955518c4-213c-11e3-a03d-abbedc3a047c_story.html.

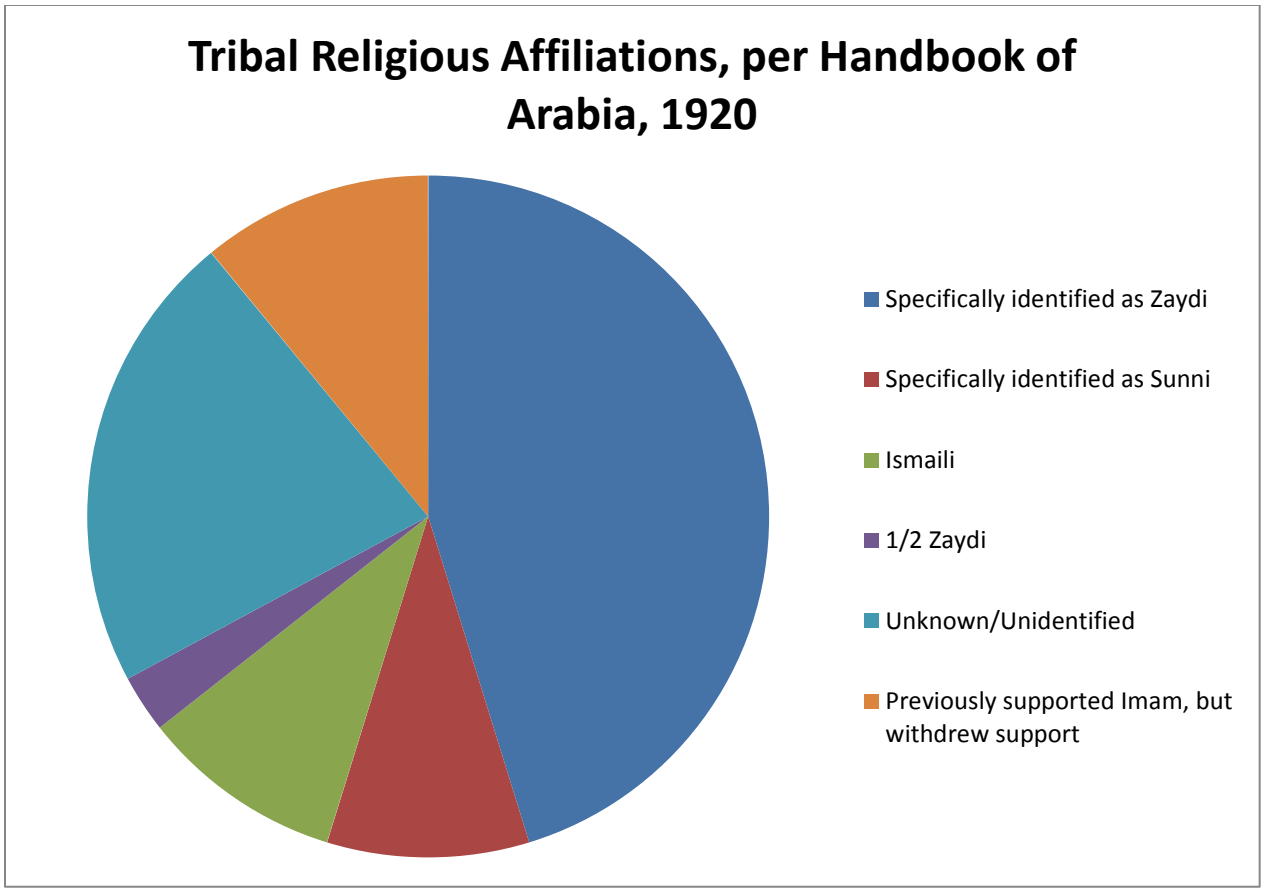


Figure 1.1. Tribal Religious Affiliations

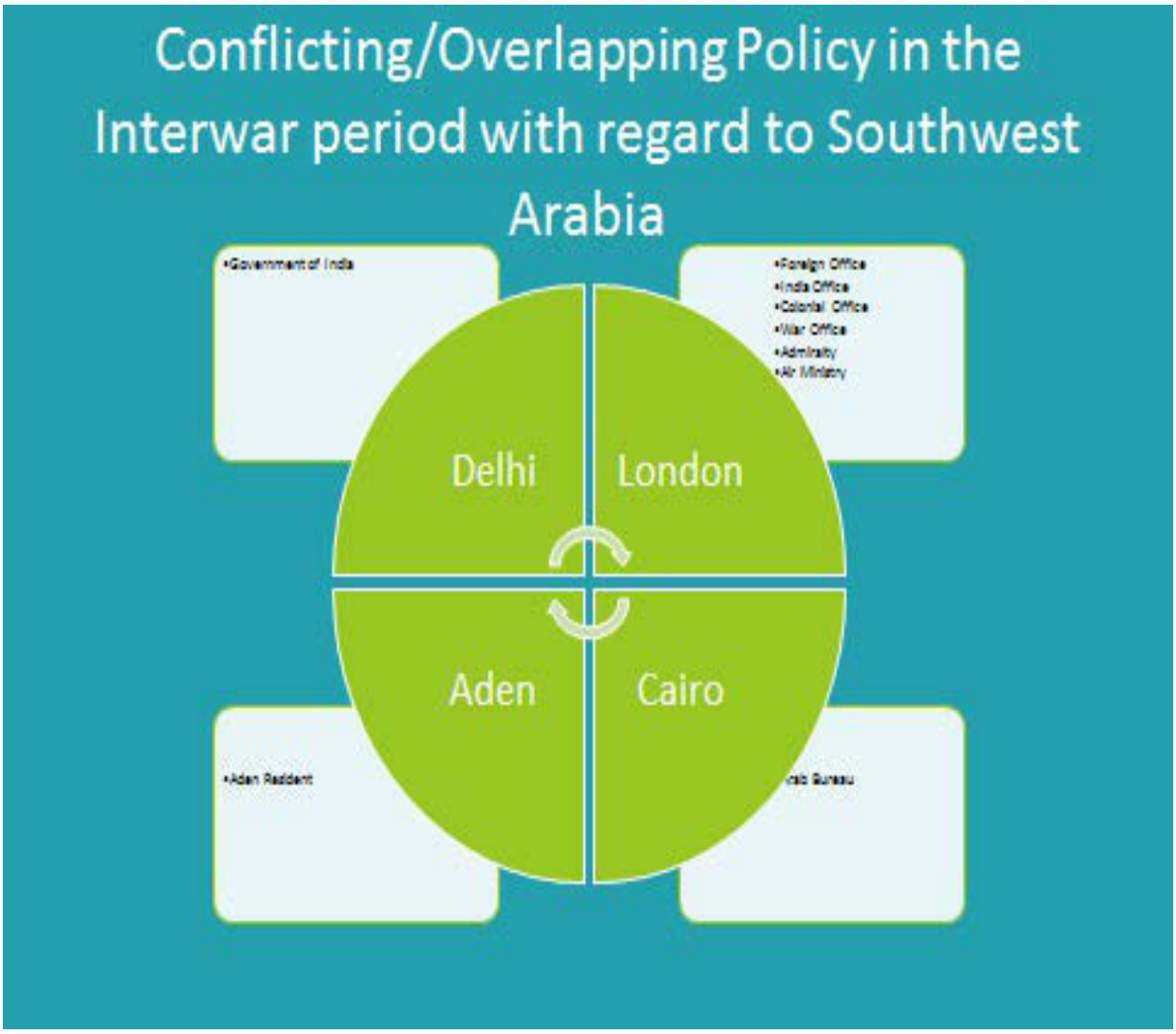


Figure 1.2. Conflicting/Overlapping Policy in the Interwar Period

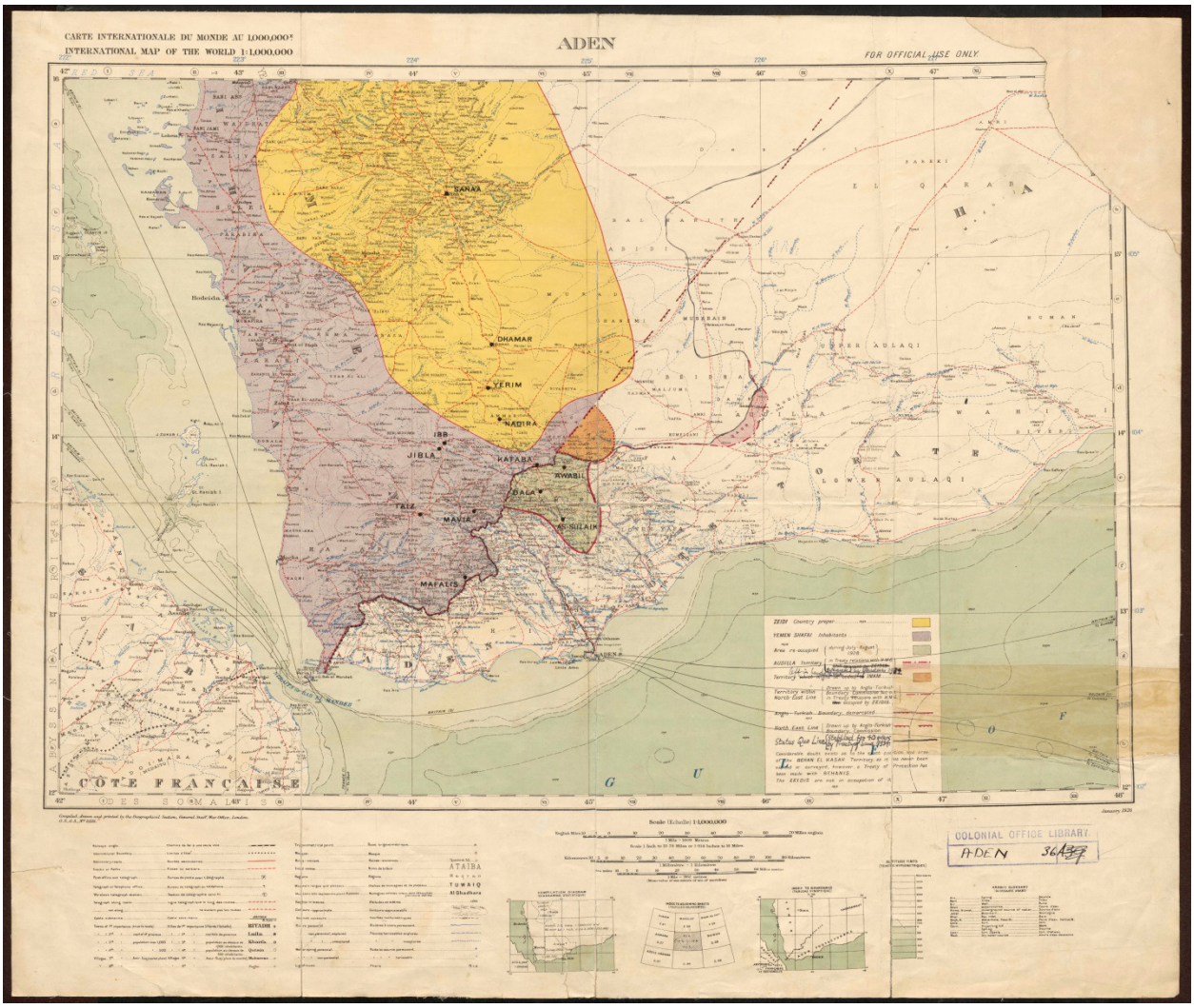
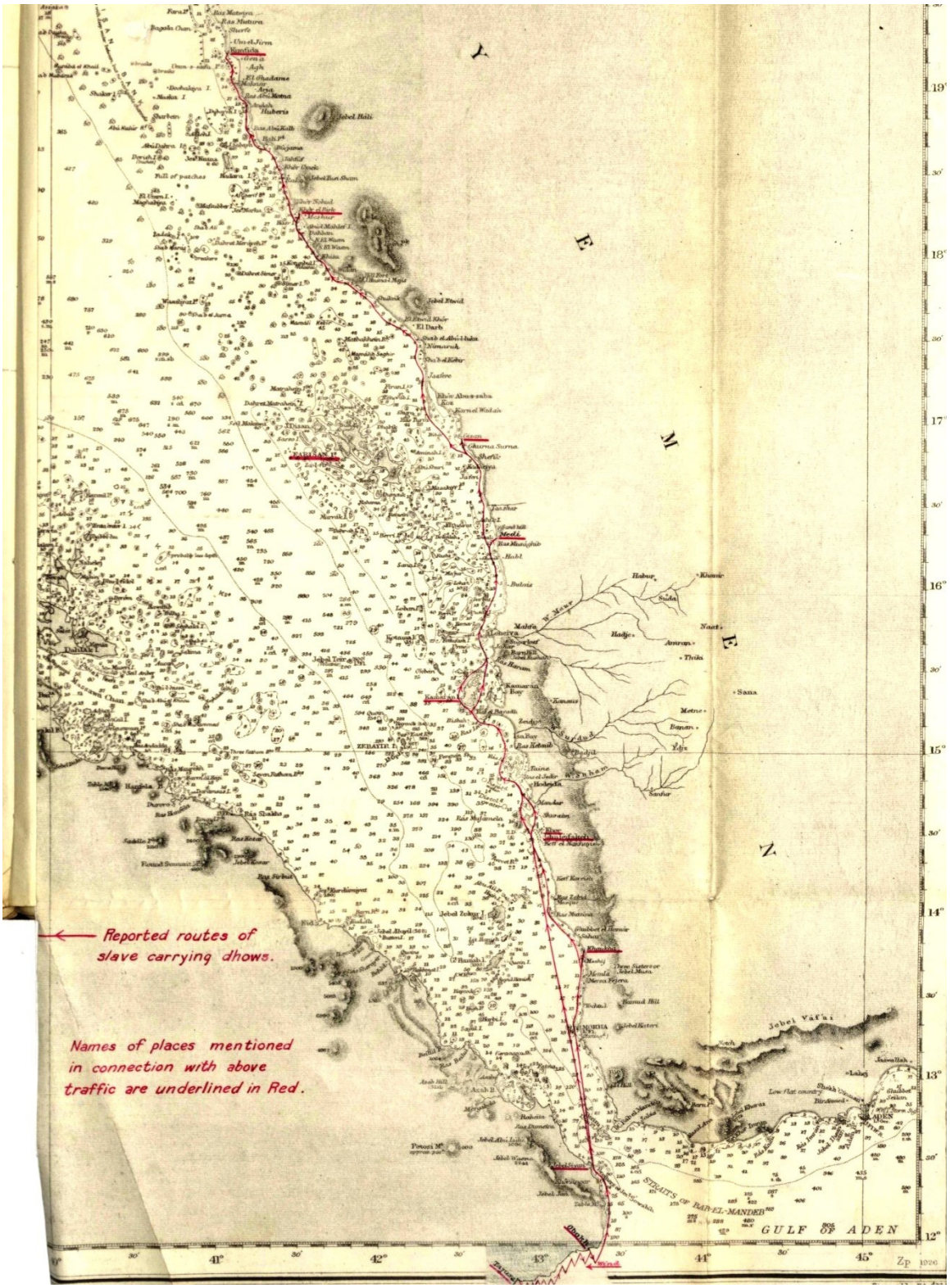


Figure 1.3. Map of Religious Divisions in Yemen (National Archives, CO 1047/30)


Reported routes of slave carrying dhows.
Names of places mentioned in connection with above traffic are underlined in Red.
GULF OF ADEN
STRAITS OF BAB-EL-MANDEB
Jebel Ya'ir
Jebel Zukur
ZEBAYIR I.
Mocha
Hodeida
Loheia
Aden
Sana
Taiz
Hadjr
Habur
Naat
Thiks
Amran
Mabra
Zabid
Beit el Fakih
Kamaran Bay
Jebel Hadi
Jebel Hamid
Jebel Hamir
Jebel Mokha
Jebel Ketori
Jebel Warden
Jebel Zuk
Jebel Abu Ali
Jebel Turr
Jebel Zubair
Jebel Rayil
Jebel Tair
Jebel Tiyar
Jebel Kamaran
Jebel Kamaran Saghir
Jebel Kamaran Kebir
Jebel Kamaran Sharki
Jebel Kamaran Gharbi
Jebel Kamaran Janubi
Jebel Kamaran Shamali
Jebel Kamaran Wasti
Jebel Kamaran Qibli
Jebel Kamaran Sharqi

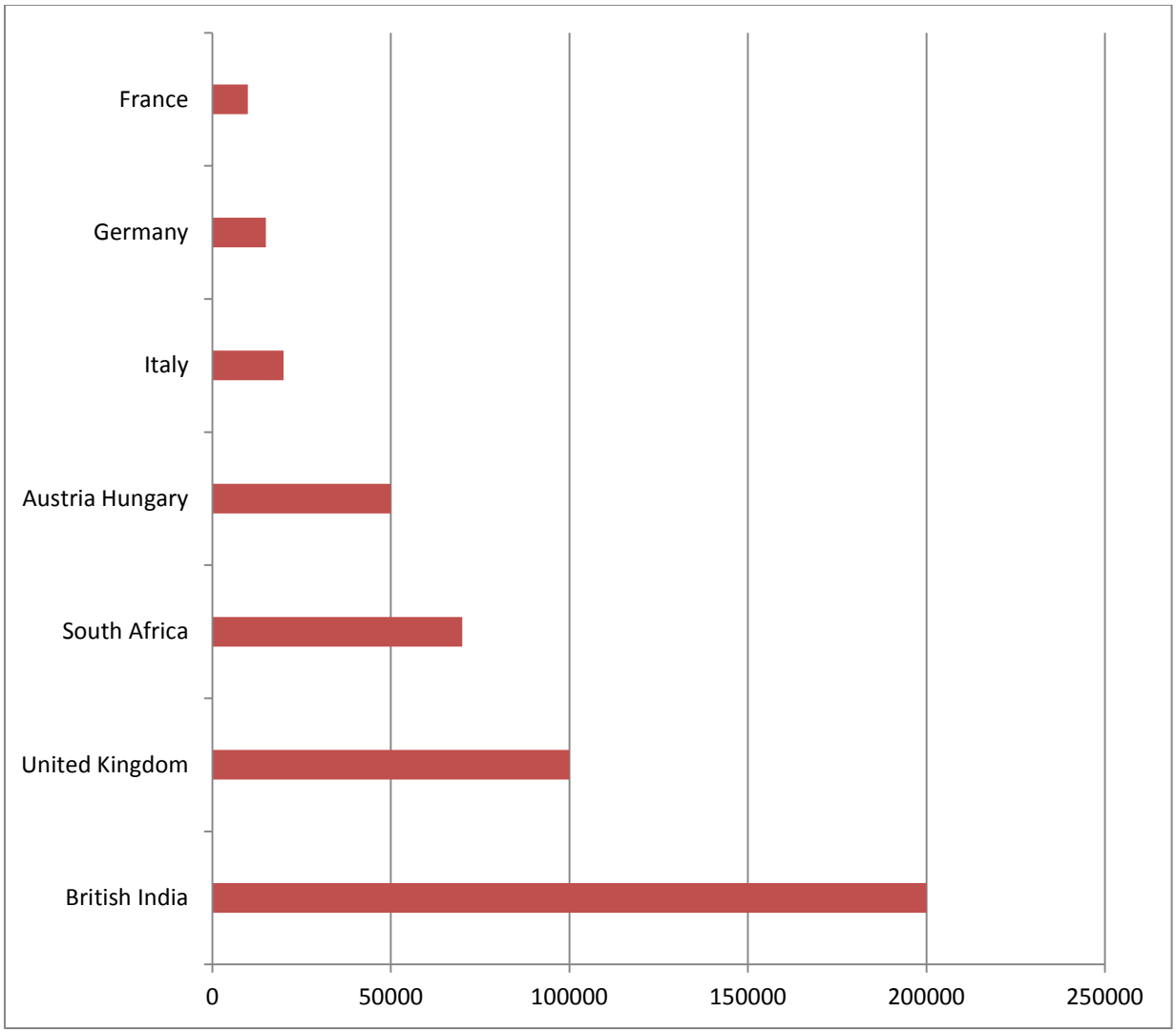


Figure 1.5 Principal Importing Countries to Yemen, 1904-1914. (Measured in Pounds Sterling) Data obtained from the National Archives, FO 141/816, "Lieutenant Wyman's Report on Trade"

GLOSSARY

Aden: A city strategically located in southern Yemen along the Gulf of Aden, approximately 110 miles from the Bab al-Mandeb. Historically it was governed by the Sultan of Lahej, but between 1839-1967 it was under one form or other of British control, first as an extension of the Government of India, and after 1937 as a British crown colony. Aden expanded its control to neighboring tribes with whom it established protection treaties, which constituted the Eastern and Western Protectorates.

Al-Akhdam: Darker-skinned people of Ethiopian and Somali descent who live in coastal Yemen and constitute the lowest class in Yemeni society.

Asir: In the early 20th century, Asir was a quasi-independent state near the Red Sea in Yemen, administered by the Idris and his family. It was fully incorporated into Saudi Arabia in 1934 per the Treaty of Taif.

Imam: Within a Sunni context, an imam is a Friday prayer leader. However, within a Shia context, an Imam designates a spiritual and political leader.

Bab al-Mandeb: Literally, the "gate of tears" or "gate of grief." The geographical location where the Arabian peninsula nearly touches the continent of Africa in the southern Red Sea.

Caliph: The political and religious successor to Muhammad. When Muhammad died, he did not leave a designated heir, which lead to the Sunni-Shia split which still exists today. The position of Caliph was abolished by Ataturk in 1924.

Dhimmi: A protected second-class status reserved for Jews and Christians within an Islamic empire. In exchange for payment of the *jizya* (tax), People of the Book could expect protection from the ruler.

Hadith: A collection of the sayings and traditions of the Muhammad. There are many collections of ahadith (pl), and together with the Qur'an, form the basis of Islamic law.

Houthi: Named for Hussein Badreddin al-Houthi (d. 2004), they are an insurgent Zaydi Shia group who live in the north Yemen governorate of Saada, where they are currently waging a war against the central government in Sana'a.

Neo-Sufism: A new type of Sufism which emerged during the nineteenth century which came under the influence of reformist thought.

Qanun: The Sultanic laws which the Ottoman Empire implemented during the reign of Suleyman the Lawgiver, partially supplementing Sharia law. This would eventually be superseded during the *Tanzimat* period by the Ottoman *nizami* (secular) laws.

Qadi: A judge within the context of Muslim law; a member of the Ulema.

Sayyid: A descendant of the Muslim prophet Muhammad. Within the context of the Shia community in Yemen, having Sayyid status was one of the requirements to qualify as an Imam.

Sharia: Body of Islamic law, to include the Qur'an and ahadith (Hadith).

Shaykh: A word which can be used as a title for the leader of a tribe or a Sufi group. It may also be used as a dignified title for any man deemed worthy of deep respect.

Shia: The minority branch of Islam, which after Muhammad's death, believed that a blood relative of the Prophet needed to succeed as Caliph. They stood in opposition to what came to be the majority branch, the Sunni. There are many sub-groups of Shia, of which the Zaydis are one.

Ulema/Ulama: Scholars of Islamic jurisprudence, they traditionally held a respected status in society, although during the reforming movements of the 18th and 19th century they were often accused of corruption and innovation.

Umma/Ummah: A general term which refers to the body of Muslim believers, similar to the Christian concept of the body of Christ, known as the Church.

Zaydi: The particular group of Shias which constitute a large minority in northern Yemen today. Named for Zayd ibn Ali, the brother of a great-grandson of Ali, the cousin and son-in-law of Muhammad, this groups is sometimes referred to as "Fiver" Shias.

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AIR 2/775 (1927-1931) Patrolling of the Red Sea Slave Trade

AIR 2/1020 Jeddah Report on "Mecca Agreement" (1926-1927)

CAB 23/48 Cabinet Meeting 51 (1924)

CAB 23/55 Cabinet Meeting 39 (1927)

CAB 23/64 Cabinet Meeting 46 (1930)

CAB 23/77 Cabinet Meeting 50 (1933)

CAB 23/79 Cabinet Meeting (1934)

CAB 24/15 Yemen Confederacy

CAB 24/140 Indian Mohammedans & the Caliphate (1922)

CAB 24/143 Eastern Report, no. 24

CAB 24/182 Committee of Imperial Defense (1926)

CO 537/656 Guns and Italians

CO 725/18/15 Jews in the Yemen

CO 725/21/6 Soviet Activities in Yemen

CO 732/43 Arms Traffic & Slavery

CO 1047/30 Religious Map of Yemen

FO 94/1261 Treaty of 1934

FO 141/589 Clayton's Report

FO 141/589 Future of Yemen Trade

FO 141/589 Bolsheviks in the Yemen

FO 141/642 Colonel Jacob's Mission (1919-1920)

FO 195/2451 Italian Intrigues in the Yemen

FO 608/81 Peace Treaty 1919

FO 800/262 Correspondence regarding use of Air Power (1928)

HW 12/113 GCHQ Interceptions

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Colleen Boyett received certificates in Modern Standard Arabic and the Syrian dialect while serving as an enlisted soldier at the Defense Language Institute in Monterey, California, 1983-1984. Upon completion of her military service, she moved to Pensacola, Florida and completed her Bachelor of Arts degree and her Master of Arts degree in history from the University of West Florida. She was awarded a Fulbright-Hays scholarship in 1998 which took her to Israel and Jordan where she conducted research into Bedouin schools in the Negev, as well as Palestinian refugee schools operated by UNRWA. After spending time as a teacher and administrator in the School District of Escambia County, Florida (1995-2006), she returned to graduate study in 2007 to pursue a doctoral program in history at Florida State University. Further language study in Yemen followed in 2008. After completing her comprehensive examinations in 2010, she conducted research in London at the British Library and the National Archives. While studying at Florida State University, the author has taught courses in Asian and Middle Eastern History. During her doctoral program she has also taught Advanced Placement World History at LaBelle High School, LaBelle, Florida, and has served as a College Board reader for Advanced Placement history examinations. She successfully defended her dissertation in the spring semester of 2014.